



FILM  
TECHNIQUE  
BY  
PUDOVKIN











# FILM TECHNIQUE

*Five Essays and Two Addresses by*

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*Translated and Annotated by*

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACES

### (a) TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE present condition of film production may be compared to the state of animal-breeding before 1900. In that year was published an outline of the principles that determine the repetition, continuous or discontinuous, of genetical traits. Until that time breeding had been a purely pragmatic pastime, and though in some domestic groups fanciers had obtained, and indeed do yet obtain, results which rival in accuracy the forecasts of Mendelian geneticists, yet the principles on which they worked were ineffable, and the causes of their skill mostly secret even from themselves.

Exactly so has it been hitherto in film production. Chaplin and Lubitsch, for example, have obtained results worthy certainly of unrestrained admiration. But neither they, nor any technician of equal achievement, have attained their results by conscious paths or—more properly—by the exercise of principles capable of being communicated. The film director, whether fumbling or dexterous, has been an inarticulate animal. Such analysis of principle as has been attempted has been the chief province of æstheticists, who have approached the problem of filmic expression from the perceptual, not from the creative, standpoint. Moreover, such persons, being invariably more familiar with the technique of



other arts, have usually forced their guesses into a Procrustean position, in which truth lies, sometimes even comically distorted.

It is at this point that the theoretical work of the Soviet experimenters begins to reach the civilised, or capitalist, world. Pudovkin explains the fertility of the Soviet cinematographic theory by the fact that in early years after the revolution there was a shortage of raw film. (This is, of course, good M.C.H.) Unable to find material to fill their camera-magazines, experimenters and students in the Soviet Union were endowed with a forced interval for reflection denied to their confrères of America and Western Europe, who, pursued by mortgages or avarice, have scarcely time to cut one picture or prepare the next during their week-end intervals between picture and picture. In any case, it is certain that the work of Kuleshov and his school lays crucial foundation for the analysis of the philosophic relation between actuality and filmic pattern. It tells us what we are actually *doing* when we create an effect upon the screen, and its proper understanding will not only shorten the path of experience, but establish the lines along which, most usefully and without waste, energy in experiment may be directed.

Pudovkin is no Aristotle. He is not even, like Kuleshov, an instructor ; but it is probable that his summary of the latter's precepts will be the more interesting to the reader because of his now wider practical experience and because his work begins

to be familiar, at least in repercussion, to the English public. The first of these essays is a lucid introduction to the rest. The second is a practical and common sense guide to scenario construction. It is the sort of thing that people in the film business, who, like myself, are pestered by them, will find useful to sell to those who at all, often indecorous, opportunities hold under our eyes impractical and importunate film-scenarios. The third is a philosophical analysis of the process of film creation, here and there redundant perhaps, but packed with that most valuable kind of truth that has long been one's dormant and unrealised possession—"das Ei von Kolumbus," as Einstein called the Rotorschiff. The address to the Film Society gives hint of a method of use of non-acting material, the investigation of which is likely to occupy the immediate future of Pudovkin, and makes certain observations on the relation between auditory and visual stimuli in films. It may not be out of place to remark that the views here theoretically set out are not supported by any merely esoteric or limited practical success. The art they define is essentially a popular art. The work, based on these principles, of the U.S.S.R. left-wing\* ("left" in the filmic, not political sense) invariably attains tremendous, in some quarters dreaded, effect upon any audience to which it is allowed to be exhibited.

Vsevolod Illarionovitch Pudovkin was born in 1893 in the town of Pensa, administrative capital of

\* Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kozintsev and Trauberg. Dovzhenko, the younger Trauberg, Ermler, etc.









the camera is yet no movement on the screen, it is no more than raw material for the future building-up, by editing, of the movement that is conveyed by the assemblage of the various strips of film. Only if the object be placed together among a number of separate objects, only if it be presented as part of a synthesis of different separate visual images, is it endowed with filmic life. Transformed like the word "beech" in our analogy, it changes itself in this process from a skeletal photographic copy of nature into a part of the filmic form.

Every object must, by editing, be brought upon the screen so that it shall have not *photographic*, but *cinematographic* essence.

One thus perceives that the meaning of editing and the problems it presents to the director are by no means exhausted by the logical time-succession inherent in the shots, or by the arrangement of a rhythm. Editing is the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form. And it is typical that, in the construction of this form, material may be used that is in reality of an entirely different character from that in the guise of which it eventually appears. I shall take an example from my last film, *The End of St. Petersburg*.

At the beginning of that part of the action that represents war, I wished to show a terrific explosion. In order to render the effect of this explosion with absolute faithfulness, I caused a great mass of dynamite to be buried in the earth, had it blasted, and

shot it. The explosion was veritably colossal—but filmically it was nothing. On the screen it was merely a slow, lifeless movement. Later, after much trial and experiment, I managed to “edit” the explosion with all the effect I required—moreover, without using a single piece of the scene I had just taken. I took a *flammenwerfer* that belched forth clouds of smoke. In order to give the effect of the crash I cut in short flashes of a magnesium flare, in rhythmic alternation of light and dark. Into the middle of this I cut a shot of a river taken some time before, that seemed to me to be appropriate owing to its special tones of light and shade. Thus gradually arose before me the visual effect I required. The bomb explosion was at last upon the screen, but, in reality, its elements comprised everything imaginable except a real explosion.

Once more, reinforced by this example, I repeat that editing is the creative force of filmic reality, and that nature provides only the raw material with which it works. That, precisely, is the relationship between reality and the film.

These observations apply also in detail to the *actors*. The man photographed is only raw material for the future composition of his image in the film, arranged in editing.

When faced with the task of presenting a captain of industry in the film *The End of St. Petersburg*, I sought to solve the problem by cutting in his figure with the equestrian statue of Peter the Great. I claim that the resultant composition is effective with



a reality quite other than that produced by the posing of an actor, which nearly always smacks of Theatre.

In my earlier film, *Mother*, I tried to affect the spectators, not by the psychological performances of an actor, but by plastic synthesis through editing. The son sits in prison. Suddenly, passed in to him surreptitiously, he receives a note that next day he is to be set free. The problem was the expression, filmically, of his joy. The photographing of a face lighting up with joy would have been flat and void of effect. I show, therefore, the nervous play of his hands and a big close-up of the lower half of his face, the corners of the smile. These shots I cut in with other and varied material—shots of a brook, swollen with the rapid flow of spring, of the play of sunlight broken on the water, birds splashing in the village pond, and finally a laughing child. By the junction of these components our expression of "prisoner's joy" takes shape. I do not know how the spectators reacted to my experiment—I myself have always been deeply convinced of its force.

Cinematography advances with rapid stride. Its possibilities are inexhaustible. But it must not be forgotten that its path to a real art will be found only when it has been freed from the dictates of an art-form foreign to it—that is, the Theatre. Cinematography stands now upon the threshold of its own methods.

The effort to affect from the screen the feelings and ideas of the public by means of editing is of

crucial importance, for it is an effort that renounces theatrical method. I am firmly convinced that it is along this path that the great international art of cinematography will make its further progress.

(Published in *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript*, translated by Georg and Nadia Friedland, Lichtbildtechnische, Berlin, 1928, and retranslated from German by I. M., in *The Film Weekly*, London, October 29, 1928.)

# I

## THE FILM SCENARIO AND ITS THEORY

### FOREWORD

**T**HE scenarios usually submitted to production firms are marked by a specific character. Almost all represent the primitive narration of some given content, their authors having apparently concerned themselves only with the relation of incident, employing for the most part literary methods, and entirely disregarding the extent to which the material they propose will be interesting as subject for cinematographic treatment. The question of special cinematographic treatment of material is highly important. Every art possesses its own peculiar method of effectively presenting its matter. This remains true, of course, for the film. To work at a scenario without knowing the methods of directorial work, the methods of shooting and cutting a film, is as foolish as to give a Frenchman a Russian poem in literal translation. In order to communicate to the Frenchman the correct impression, one must rewrite the poem anew, with knowledge of the peculiarities of French verse-form. In order to write a scenario suitable for filming, one must know the methods by which the spectator can be influenced from the screen.

The opinion is often met with that the scenarist has

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only to give a general, primitive outline of the action. The whole work of detailed "filmic" adaptation is an affair of the director. This is entirely false. It should be remembered that in no art can construction be divided into stages independent of one another. Already that very general approach involved in the fact of a work being thought out as a substantial future presupposes attention to possible particularities and details. When one thinks of a theme, then inevitably one thinks simultaneously, be it hazily and unclearly, of the treatment of its action, and so forth. From this it follows that, even though the scenarist abstain from laying down detailed instructions on what to shoot and how to shoot it, what to edit and how to edit it, none the less a knowledge and consideration of the possibilities and peculiarities of directorial work will enable him to propose material that *can* be used by the director, and will make possible to him the creation of a *filmically expressive* film. Usually the result is exactly the opposite—usually the first approach of the scenarist to his work implies in the best cases uninteresting, in the worst insurmountable, obstacles to filmic adaptation.

The purpose of this study is to communicate what is, it is true, a very elementary knowledge of the basic principles of scenario work in their relation to the basic principles of directorial work. Apart from those considerations specifically filmic, the scenarist, especially in the field of general construction, is confronted with the laws governing creation in other allied arts. A scenario may be constructed in the

style of a playwright, and will then be subject to the laws that determine the construction of a play. In other cases it may approach the novel, and its construction will consequently be conditioned by other laws. But these questions can be treated only superficially in the present sketch, and readers especially interested in them must turn to specialised works.

## PART I

### THE SCENARIO

#### THE MEANING OF THE "SHOOTING-SCRIPT"

It is generally known that the finished film consists of a whole series of more or less short pieces following one another in definite sequence. In observing the development of the action the spectator is transferred first to one place, then to another ; yet more, he is shown an incident, even sometimes an actor, not as a whole, but consecutively by aiming the camera at various parts of the scene or of the human body. This kind of construction of a picture, the resolving of the material into its elements and subsequent building from them of a filmic whole, is called "constructive editing," and it will be discussed in detail in the second part of this sketch. As a preliminary it is necessary only for us to note the fact of this basic method of film-work.

In shooting a film, the director is not in a position to do so consecutively—that is, begin with the first

scene and thence, following the scenario, proceed in order right up to the last. The reason is simple. Suppose, for argument's sake, you build a require set—it nearly always happens that the scenes taking place in it are spread throughout the whole scenario—and suppose the director take it into his head after shooting a scene on that set, to proceed immediately with the scene next following in the order of the action of the developing scenario, then it will be necessary to build a new set without demolishing the first, then another, and so forth, accumulating a whole series of structures without being able to destroy the preceding ones. To work in this way is impracticable for simple technical reasons. Thus both director and actor are deprived of the possibility of continuity in the actual process of shooting. But, at the same time, continuity is essential. With the loss of continuity, we lose the unity of the work—its style and, with that, its effect. From this derives the inevitable necessity of a detailed preliminary overhauling of the scenario. Only then can a director work with confidence, only then can he attain significant results, when he treats each piece carefully according to a filmic plan, when, clearly visualising to himself a series of screen images, he traces and fixes the whole course of development, both of the scenario action and of the work of the separate characters. In this preliminary paper-work must be created that style, that unity, which conditions the value of any work of art. All the various positions of the camera—such as long-shot, close-up,



from above, and so forth; all the technical effects—such as “fade,” “match,” and “pan”—affect the relation of a shot to the picture itself, preceding and following it; everything that arises or strengthens the inner content of a scene, must be exactly considered; otherwise in the shooting of some scene, taken at random from the middle of the scenario, irreparable errors may arise. Thus the overhauled “working”—that is, ready for shooting—form of scenario provides in itself the detailed description of each, even the smallest, piece, citing the technical method required for its execution. It is certainly, to require the scenarist to write his work in such a form would be to require him to become a director; but all this scenario work must be done, even if he cannot deliver a “cast-iron” scenario, ready for shooting, nevertheless, in that degree in which he provides a material more or less approaching the ideal form, the scenarist will provide the director not with a series of obstacles to be overcome, but with a series of impulses that can be used. The more technically complete his working-out of the scenario, the more chance the scenarist has to see on the screen the images shaped as he has visualised them.

#### THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCENARIO

If we try to divide the work of the scenarist into, as it were, a succession of stages, passing from the general to the particular, we get the following rough scheme:

1. The theme.
2. The action (the treatment).\*
3. The cinematographic working-out of the action (filmic representation).

Certainly, such a scheme is the result of the dissection of an already completed scenario. As already remarked, the creative process can take place in other sequence. Separate scenes can be imagined and simultaneously find their position in the process of growth. But, none the less, some final overhaul of the work on the scenario must take into account all these three stages in their sequence. One must always remember that the film, by the very nature of its construction (the rapid alternation of successive pieces of celluloid), requires of the spectator an exceptional concentration of attention. The director, and consequently the scenarist also, leads despotically along with him the attention of the spectator. The latter sees only that which the director shows him ; for reflection, for doubt, for criticism, there is *neither room nor time*, and consequently the smallest error in clearness or vividness of construction will be apprehended as an unpleasant confusion or as a simple, ineffective blank. Remember, therefore, that the scenarist must always take care to secure the greatest simplicity and clarity in the resolution of each separate problem, at whatever moment in his work it may confront him. For convenience in

\* I combine these two as one for the purposes of a short sketch, but this is not technically exact. (*Author's note.*)

on we will discuss separately in order each separate points of the scheme outlined, that establish the specific requirements set by in the selection and application of different materials and the different methods of their use.

### THE THEME

theme is a supra-artistic concept. In fine, human concept can be employed as a theme, film, no more than any other art, can place to its selection. The only question that can be asked is whether it be valuable or useless to the artist. And this question is a purely sociological problem, the solution of which does not enter the scope of film technique. But mention must be made of certain requirements, conditioning the selection of theme, if only because of the present-day position of film art. The film is yet young, and the wealth of material is not yet extensive ; for this reason it is wise to indicate temporary limitations without arbitrarily attributing to them the permanence and validity of laws. First of all must be mentioned the problem of theme. Formerly there ruled a tendency, in part it exists to-day, to select such themes as were made possible by the new technical facilities. Since the advent of the cinematograph, the material spreading extraordinarily widely in time and space. As example may be quoted the film *Intolerance*, the theme of which may be stated as follows : " Throughout all ages and among all peoples, from the earliest times to the present day, stalks intolerance, dragging in its wake

murder and blood." This is a theme of monstrous extent ; the very fact that it spreads " throughout all ages and among all peoples " already conditions an extraordinary breadth of material. The result is extremely characteristic. In the first place, scarcely compressed into twelve reels, the film became so ponderous that the tiredness it created largely effaced its effect. In the second place, the abundance of matter forced the director to work the theme out quite generally, without touching upon details, and consequently there was a strong discrepancy between the depth of the motif and the superficiality of its form. Only the part played in the present day, in which the action was more concentrated, produced the necessary, effective impression. It is especially necessary to pay attention to this forced superficiality. At the present moment film-art, still in its infancy, does not possess means enabling it to embrace so wide a material.

Note that most good films are characterised by very simple themes and relatively uncomplicated action. Béla Balázs, in his book " Der Sichtbare Mensch," quite correctly remarks that the failure of the majority of film adaptations of literary works is to be ascribed mainly to the fact that the scenarists concerned strove to compress a superabundance of material into the narrow confines of the picture.

Cinematography is, before anything else, limited by the definite length of a film. A film more than 7,000 feet long already creates an unnecessary exhaustion. There is, it is true, a method of issuing

a long film in several so-called serial parts. But this method is possible only to films of a special kind. Adventure-films, their content consisting chiefly of a series of extraordinary happenings in the career of the hero, little connected with one another after all, and always having each an independent interest (stunts—either acrobatic or directorial), can naturally be shown to the spectator in several episodes of a single cycle. The spectator, losing nothing in impression, can see the second<sup>d</sup> part without acquaintance with the first, the content of which he gathers from an opening title. The relationship between the episodes is attained by crude play upon the curiosity of the spectator; for example, at the end of the first part the hero lands into some inextricable situation, solved only at the beginning of the second, and so forth. But the film of deeper content, the value of which lies always in the impression it creates as a whole, can certainly not be thus divided into parts for the spectator to see separately, one each week.<sup>1</sup> The influence of this limitation of film length is yet increased by the fact that the film technician, for the effective representation of a concept, requires considerably more material than, let us say, the novelist or playwright. In a single word often a whole complex of images is contained. Visual images having an inferential significance of this nature are, however, very rare, and the film technician is therefore forced to carry out a detailed representation if he desire to achieve an effective impression. I repeat that the necessity

to limit the scale of the theme is perhaps only a temporary one, but, having regard to our actual store of means of filmic representation, it is unavoidable.

Meanwhile, the other requirement, conditioned by the basic character itself of filmic spectacle, will probably exist for ever—the necessity for *clarity*. I have already mentioned above the necessity for absolute clarity in the resolution of every problem met with in the process of working on the film ; this holds true, of course, for the work on the theme. If the basic idea that is to serve as backbone to the scenario be vague and indefinite, the scenario is condemned to miscarry.<sup>3</sup> True that in the examination of the written representation, it is possible, by careful study, to disentangle one's way among the hints and unclarities, but, transposed upon the screen, such a scenario becomes irritatingly confusing.

I give an example ; a scenario-writer sent us an already completed scenario on the life of a factory workman in the days before the Russian revolution. The scenario was written round a given hero, a workman. In the course of the action he came into contact with a series of persons—hostile and friendly : the enemies harmed him, the friends helped him. At the beginning of the scenario the hero was depicted as a rough, ungoverned man ; at the end he became an honest, class-conscious workman. The scenario was written in well-drawn, naturalistic environmental colours, it undoubtedly contained interesting, live material witnessing to the powers of observation and the knowledge of its author, yet none the less it was

turned down. A series of slices of life, a series of chance meetings and encounters bound together by no more than their sequence in time, is, after all, no more than a group of episodes. The theme as basic idea, uniting in itself the meaning of all the events depicted—that is what was lacking. Consequently the separate characters were without significance, the actions of the hero and the people round him as chaotic and adventitious as the movements of pedestrians on a street, passing by before a window.

But the same author went through his scenario, altering it in accordance with the remarks made to him. He carefully reconstructed the line of the hero, guided by a clearly formulated theme. As basis he set the following idea : " It is not sufficient to be revolutionarily inclined ; to be of service to the cause one must possess a properly organised consciousness of reality." The merely blustering workman of the opening was changed to a reckless anarchist,<sup>2</sup> his enemies thus stood in a clear and definite front, his contacts with them and with his future friends assumed clear purpose and clear meaning, a whole series of superfluous complications fell away, and the modified scenario was transformed to a rounded and convincing whole. The idea defined above can be termed that theme the clear formulation of which inevitably organises the entire work and results in a clearly effective creation. Note as rule : formulate the theme clearly and exactly—otherwise the work will not acquire that essential meaning and unity





A writer, when he plans out a future work, establishes always a series of, as it were, key-stones, significant to the elucidation of the theme and spread over the whole of the work in preparation. These key-stones, as it were, mark the general outline ; to them belong the elements characteristic of the various persons, the nature of the events that bring these persons together, often the details conditioning the significance and strength of the elements of crescendo and diminuendo, often even just separate incidents selected for their power and expressiveness.

Exactly the same process occurs certainly in the work of the scenarist. To consider the action abstractly is impossible. It is impossible to plan merely that at the beginning the hero is an anarchist and then, after meeting with a series of mishaps in his efforts at revolutionary work, becomes a conscious communist. A scheme of this kind is no advance on the theme and brings us no nearer the essential treatment. Not only *what* happens must be perceived, but also *how* it happens ; in the work on the action the *form* must already be sensible. Imagining a reform in the cosmic philosophy of the hero is still very far from creating a climax in the scenario. Before the discovery of a definite concrete form that, in the scenarist's opinion, will affect the spectator from the screen, the abstract idea of a reform has no creative value and cannot serve as a key-stone in the constitution of the action ; but these key-stones are necessary ; they establish the hard skeleton and remove the danger of those blank gaps that may

that defines us every work of art. All further time becomes in forming the choice of theme as connected with this determination. As I have already said, the creative process never takes place in a haphazard, aimless, thinking of the theme and its possible development, for thinking of the action and its development.

#### THE ACTION-TREATMENT OF THE THEME

The scenario is the very first stage of his work. Already possesses a given material later to be developed in the framework of his future creation. This material is provided for him by knowledge, experience, and, finally, imagination. Having established the theme, as basic idea conditioning the selection of this material, the scenario must begin its grouping. Here the persons of the action are introduced, their relations to one another established, their various significance in the development of the plot determined, and, finally, here are indicated given proportions for the distribution of the entire material throughout the scenario.

In entering the province of the action-treatment of the theme, the scenario first comes into contact with the requirements of creative work. Just as the theme is, by definition, a supra-artistic element, so, contrastingly, the work on the action is conditioned by a whole series of requirements peculiar to the given art.

Let us first approach the most general aspect—let us determine the character of the work on the action.

house, falls in love with her. Two marriages are celebrated. The narrow garret of the chauffeur seems an absurd dog-kennel to the daughter of the mansion. The natural desire of the chauffeur to find a meal at home ready for him after a hard day's work encounters an invincible obstacle in the fact that his wife has no idea how to make a fire or manage the cooking utensils; the fire is too hot, the crockery dirties her hands, and the half-cooked food flies all over the floor. When friends of the chauffeur visit him to spend a jolly evening, they behave themselves so crudely, by the standards of the spoilt lady, that she stalks demonstratively out of the room and bursts into an unexpected fit of hysterics.

Meanwhile, no better fares the ex-laundress in the mansion of the rich. Surrounded by scornful servants, she plumps from one embarrassment into another. She marvels at the lady's-maids who help her to dress and undress, she looks clumsy and absurd in her long-trained gown, at a dinner-party she becomes an object of ridicule, to the distress of her husband and his relatives. By chance the chauffeur and the former laundress meet. It is obvious that, influenced by disappointment, their former mutual inclination re-awakens. The two unhappy couples part, to reunite themselves in new and happier combinations. The laundress is brilliant in the kitchen, and the capitalist's new wife wears her dresses faultlessly and is marvellous at the fox-trot.

The action is as primitive as the theme, but none the less the film can be regarded as highly successful

always occur if some important stage in the development of the scenario be treated carelessly and abstractly. Neglect of this element in the work of final filmic polishing may occasion inexpressive material, unsuitable for plastic treatment, and thus may destroy the whole construction.

The novelist expresses his key-stones in written descriptions, the dramatist by rough dialogue, but the scenarist must think in plastic (externally expressive) images. He must train his imagination, he must develop the habit of representing to himself whatever comes into his head in the form of a sequence of images upon the screen. Yet more, he must learn to command these images and to select from those he visualises the clearest and most vivid; he must know how to command them as the writer commands his words and the playwright his spoken phrases.<sup>4</sup>

The clarity and vividness of the action-treatment directly depends on the clear formulation of the theme. Let us take as an example an American film, naïve, certainly, and not especially valuable, issued under the name *Saturday Night*. Though its content is slight, it affords an excellent model of a theme clearly outlined and action simply and vividly treated. The theme is as follows: "Persons of different social class will never be happy when inter-married." The construction of the action runs so. A chauffeur spurns the favours of a laundress, for he falls in love with a capitalist's daughter whom he drives every day in his car. The son of another capitalist, chancing to see the young laundress in his

house, falls in love with her. Two marriages are celebrated. The narrow garret of the chauffeur seems an absurd dog-kennel to the daughter of the mansion. The natural desire of the chauffeur to find a meal at home ready for him after a hard day's work encounters an invincible obstacle in the fact that his wife has no idea how to make a fire or manage the cooking utensils ; the fire is too hot, the crockery dirties her hands, and the half-cooked food flies all over the floor. When friends of the chauffeur visit him to spend a jolly evening, they behave themselves so crudely, by the standards of the spoilt lady, that she stalks demonstratively out of the room and bursts into an unexpected fit of hysterics.

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in its clear, well-thought out construction. Every detail is in place and directly related to the pervading idea. Even in this superficial sketch of its content one senses the presence of vivid, externally expressed images: the kitchen, the chauffeur's friends, the elegant clothes, the guests at dinner, and, again, the kitchen and the clothes in another form. Every essential element in the development of the scenario is characterised by clear, plastic material.

As counter-model I shall reproduce an extract from one of the many scenarios that pour in every day: "The Nikonov family is reduced to direct poverty, neither the father nor Natasha can find work—refusals everywhere. Often Andrei visits them, and seeks with fervent words to encourage the despairing Natasha. At last, in despair, the father goes to the contractor and offers to make peace with him, and the contractor agrees on condition that he shall receive the daughter in marriage, and so forth." This is a typical example of filmic colourlessness and helplessness in representation. There is nothing but meetings and talkings. Such expressions as "*Often Andrei visits them,*" "*with fervent words he seeks to encourage*" "*refusals everywhere,*" and so forth, show a complete lack of any connection between the work on the action and that filmic form the scenario is later to assume. Such incidents may serve, at best, as material for titles, but never for shots. For the word "*often*" means, in any case, several times, and to show Andrei making his visit four or five times would seem absurd even to the author of this

scenario; the same applies to the expression "refusals everywhere."

What is said here is not being pedantic about a word. It is important to realise that even in the preparatory general treatment of the scenario must be indicated nothing that is impossible to represent, or that is inessential, but only that which can be established as clear and plastically expressive key-stones. To express externally the character of a scene showing direst poverty, to find acts (not words) characterising the relationship of Andrei to Natasha—this is what will provide such key-stones. It may be argued that work on plastic form belongs already to the next stage and can be left to the director, but to this I emphasise once again that it is always important to have the possible plastic form before one's eyes even in the general approach to the work, in order to escape the possibility of blank gaps in the subsequent treatment. Remember, for example, the word "often," already mentioned as one entirely unnecessary and incapable of plastic expression.

Thus we have established the necessity for the scenarist always to orientate himself according to the plastic material that, in the end, must serve as form for his representation. We now turn to the general questions of concentration of the action as a whole. There is a whole series of standards that regulate the construction of a narrative, of a novel, of a play. They stand all, undoubtedly, in close relation to scenario work, but their transcription cannot be compressed into the narrow limits of this sketch.<sup>3</sup>





excellent directorial treatment, is watched with much diminished interest. And the last reel, containing the weakest material of the whole (a journey through the streets of Moscow and various empty factories), completely effaces the good impression of the film and lets the spectator go out unsatisfied.

As an interesting example of opposite and correct regulation of increasing elements of tension in the action may be instanced the films of the well-known American director, Griffith. He has created a type of film-ending, even distinguished by his name, that is used by the multitude of his successors up to the present day. Let us take the present-day part of the film *Intolerance*, already instanced. A young workman, discharged owing to participation in a strike, comes to New York, and falls in straightway with a band of petty thieves ; but, after meeting the girl he loves, he decides to seek honest employment. Yet the "villains" do not leave him in peace. Finally they involve him in a trial for murder and he gets into prison. The proofs seem so incontestable to the judge and jury that he is condemned to death. At the end of the picture his sweetheart, meanwhile become his wife, unexpectedly discovers the real murderer. Her husband is already being prepared for execution ; only the governor has power to intervene, and he has just left the town on an express train.

There ensues a terrific chase to save the hero. The woman rushes after the train on a racing-car whose owner has realised that a man's life depends upon his speed. In the cell the man receives unction. The car

Of the questions of general construction of the scenario, mention must be made here only of one. During work on the treatment the scenarist must always consider the varying degree of *tension* in the action. This tension must, after all, be reflected in the spectator, forcing him to follow the given part of the picture with more or less excitement. This excitement does not depend from the dramatic situation alone, it can be created or strengthened by purely extraneous methods.<sup>6</sup> The gradual winding-up of the dynamic elements of the action, the introduction of scenes built from rapid, energetic work of the characters, the introduction of crowd scenes, all these govern increases of excitement in the spectator, and one must learn so to construct the scenario that the spectator is gradually engrossed by the developing action, receiving the most effective impulse only at the end. The vast majority of scenarios suffer from clumsy building up of tension. As example one may quote the Russian film *The Adventures of Mr. West*. The first three reels are watched with ever-growing interest. A cowboy, arrived in Moscow with the American visitor West, lands into and escapes from a series of exceedingly complicated situations, the interest steadily increasing with his dexterity. The dynamically saturated earlier reels are easy to look at and grip the spectator with ever-increasing excitement. But after the end of the third reel, where the cowboy's adventures came to an unexpected end, the spectator experiences a natural reaction, and the continuation, in spite of the

excellent directorial treatment, is watched with much diminished interest. And the last reel, containing the weakest material of the whole (a journey through the streets of Moscow and various empty factories), completely effaces the good impression of the film and lets the spectator go out unsatisfied.

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has almost reached the express. The preparations for the execution are nearing their end. At the very last moment, when the noose is being laid round the neck of the hero, comes the pardon, attained by the wife at the price of her last energy and effort. The quick changes of scene, the contrasting alternation of the tearing machines with the methodical preparations for the execution of an innocent man, the ever-increasing concern of the spectator—"will they be in time, will they be in time?"—all these compel an intensification of excitement that, being placed at the end, successfully concludes the picture. In the method of Griffith are combined the inner dramatic content of the action and a masterly employment of external effort (dynamic tension).

His films can be used as models of correctly contrasted intensification. A working out of the action of the scenario in which all the lines of behaviour of the various characters are clearly expressed, in which all the major events in which the characters take part are consecutively described, and in which, last but not least, the tension of the action is correctly considered and constructed in such a way that its gradual intensification rises to a climactic end—this, in fine, is a treatment already of considerable value and useful to the director in representation. Written though it may be in purely literary phraseology, such a treatment will provide the libretto, as it were, of the scenario; and, in the hands of the specialist director, it will be transformable into a working script the more easily the more that orientation on plastic



material, of which I spoke above, has been taken into consideration in working out the action.

Already the next stage in the work of the scenarist is the specific cinematographic overhaul of the action. The scenario must be divided into sequences, these into scenes, and the scenes into the separate shots (script-scenes)<sup>7</sup> that correspond to the separate pieces of celluloid from which the film is ultimately joined together. A reel must not exceed a certain length—its average length works out at from 900 to 1,200 feet.<sup>8</sup> The film consists usually of from six to eight reels, and the scenario-writer desirous of endowing his work with specific filmic treatment must learn to *feel* its length. In order correctly to feel it he should take into consideration the following facts. The projector at normal speed runs through about one foot per second. Consequently a reel runs through in under fifteen minutes, and the whole film in about an hour and a half.<sup>9</sup> If one try to visualise each separate scene as a component of a reel, as it appears upon the screen, and consider the time each will take up, one can reckon the quantity required as content of the whole scenario.<sup>10</sup>

A scenario worked out to the elementary and preliminary extent of division into a series of reels, sequences, and separate scenes looks as follows<sup>11</sup> :

#### REEL ONE

*Scene 1.*—A peasant waggon, sinking in the mud, slowly trails along a country road. Sadly and reluctantly the hooded driver urges on his tired

horse. A figure cowers into the corner of the waggon, trying to wrap itself in an old soldier's cloak for protection against the penetrating wind. A passer-by, coming towards the waggon, pauses, standing inquisitively. The driver turns to him.

Title :

*" Is it far to Nakhabin ? "*

The pedestrian answers, pointing with his hand. The waggon sets onward, while the passer-by stares after it and then continues on his way.

*Scene 2* —A peasant hut. In the corner on a bench lies an old man covered with rags; he breathes with difficulty. An old woman is busy-ing herself about the hearth and irritably clattering among the pots. The sick man turns himself round painfully and speaks to her.

Title :

*" It sounds as if some one were knocking."*

The old woman goes to the window and looks out.

Title :

*" Imagination, Mironitch ; the door rattles in the wind."*

A scenario written in this way, already divided into separate scenes and with titles, forms the first phase filmic overhaul. But it is still far from the working-pt, referred to above, already fully prepared for

## ON FILM TECHNIQUE

immediate shooting. Note that there is a whole series of details characteristic for the given scene and emphasised by their literary form, such as, for example, "sinking in the mud," "sadly the driver," "a passenger, wrapped in a soldier's cloak," "the piercing wind"—none of these details will reach the spectator if they are introduced merely as incidentals in shooting the scene as a whole, just as it is written. The film possesses essentially specific and highly effective methods by means of which the spectator can be made to notice each separate detail (mud, wind, behaviour of driver, behaviour of fare), showing them one by one, just as we should describe them in separate sequence in literary work, and not just simply to note "bad weather," "two men on a wagon." This method is called constructive editing.<sup>10</sup> Something of the kind is used by certain scenario-writers in *interpolating* into their description of a scene a so-called "close-up"—thus, "a village street on a church holiday. An animated group of peasants. In the centre speaks a Comsomolka"<sup>11</sup> (close-up). New groups come up. The elders of the village. Indignant cries are heard from them."

Such "interpolated close-ups" had better be omitted—they have nothing to do with constructive editing. Terms such as "interpolation" and "cut-in" are absurd expressions, the remnants of an old misunderstanding of the technical methods of the film. The details organically belonging to scenes of the kind instanced must not be interpolated into the scene, but the latter must be built out of them. We





4. *Closer*.—The woman with her head hanging back, her eyes staring at the lens. *Mix*.
5. The torn flag flutters in the wind. *Slow fade-out*.

This is an example of a slow, solemn, introductory sequence. The mixes are used to emphasise the slowness. The "pan" gives the same effect, and the fades separate the sequence into a separate independent motif.

Now an example of a dynamic sequence in heightened editing tempo.

1. From the corner rushes a crowd of workmen. They run towards the lens ; the figures flee rapidly past it.
2. A workman leaps over a great crowbar and runs on. He suddenly stops, and calls :

Title :

*" Save the first shop ! "*

3. A second workman clambers on to a crane.
4. Steam streams upwards. A frenzied siren shrieks.
5. The workman on the crane bends over and looks downwards.
6. The running crowd of workpeople (*taken from above*).
7. The workman on the crane calls with all his strength :

Title (in large letters) :

*" SAVE THE FIRST SHOP ! "*

8. *Shot from above*.—The running crowd stops, stands for a moment, and then rushes on anew.

9. A section of the running crowd knocks over a woman.

10. *Close-up*.—The woman who fell raises herself, and clasps her head, swaying.

11. The running mass.

Here is shown the editing of quickly alternating pieces, creating the desired excitement by their rhythm. The increase in size of the title emphasises the increasing panic.

Of course, this form of scenario requires thorough, special training, but I repeat once again that only determined effort on the part of the scenarist to reach as near as possible to this technically correct form will turn him into a writer able to give in a general treatment material even *usable* in film work.

A scenario will only be good if its writer shall have mastered a knowledge of specific methods, if he know how to use them as weapons for the winning of effect; otherwise the scenario will be but raw material that must, to an extent of ninety per cent, be subordinated to the treatment of a specialist.

## PART II

### THE PLASTIC MATERIAL

THE scenario-writer must bear always in mind the fact that every sentence that he writes will

have to appear plastically upon the screen in some visible form. Consequently, it is not the words he writes that are important, but the emotionally expressed plastic images that he describes in those words. As a matter of fact, it is not so easy to find such plastic images. They must, before anything else, be clear and expressive. Anyone familiar with literary work can well represent to himself what is an expressive word, or an expressive style; he knows that there are such things as telling, expressive words, as vividly expressive word-constructions—sentences. Similarly, he knows that the involved, obscure style of an inexperienced writer, with a multitude of superfluous words, is the consequence of his inability to select and control them. What is here said of literary work is entirely applicable to the work of the scenarist, only the word is replaced by the plastic image. The scenarist must know how to find and to use plastic (visually expressive) material: that is to say, he must know how to discover and how to select, from the limitless mass of material provided by life and its observation, those forms and movements that shall most clearly and vividly express in images the whole content of his idea.<sup>12</sup>

Let us quote certain illustrative examples.

In the film *Tol'able David* there is a sequence in which a new character—an escaped convict, a tramp—comes into the action. The type of a thorough scoundrel. The task of the scenarist was to give his characteristics. Let us analyse how it was done, by describing the series of following shots.

8. *Shot from above.*—The running crowd stops, stands for a moment, and then rushes on anew.

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1. The tramp—a degenerate brute, his face overgrown with unshaven bristles—is about to enter a house, but stops, his attention caught by something.

2. Close-up of the face of the watching tramp.

3. Showing what he sees—a tiny, fluffy kitten asleep in the sun.

4. The tramp again. He raises a heavy stone with the transparent intention of using it to obliterate the sleeping little beast, and only the casual push of a fellow, just then carrying objects into the house, hinders him from carrying out his cruel intention.

In this little incident there is not one single explanatory title, and yet it is effective, clearly and vividly. Why? Because the plastic material has been correctly and suitably chosen. The sleeping kitten is a perfect expression of complete innocence and freedom from care, and thus the heavy stone in the hands of the huge man immediately becomes the symbol of absurd and senseless cruelty to the mind of the spectator who sees this scene. Thus the end is attained. The characterisation is achieved, and at the same time its abstract content wholly expressed, with the help of happily chosen plastic material.

Another example from the same film. The context of the incident is as follows : misfortune is come upon a family of peasants—the eldest son has been crippled by a blow with a stone ; the father has died of a heart-attack ; the youngest son (the hero of the film), still half a boy, knows who is responsible for all their ills—the tramp, who had treacherously attacked his brother. Again and again in the course

of the picture the youngster seeks to be revenged upon the blackguard. The weapon of revenge—an old flint-lock. When the disabled brother is brought into the house, and the family, dazed with despair, is gathered round his bed, the boy, half crying, half gritting his teeth, secretly loads the flint-lock. The sudden death of the father and the supplications of the mother, clinging in despair to the feet of her son, restrain his outbreak. The boy remains the sole hope of the family. When, later, he again reaches secretly for the flint-lock and takes it from the wall, the voice of his mother, calling him to go and buy soap, compels him to hang the gun up again and run out to the store. Note with what mastery the old, clumsy-looking flint-lock is here employed. It is as if it incarnated the thirst for revenge that tortures the boy. Every time the hand reaches for the flint-lock the spectator knows what is passing in the mind of the hero. No titles, no explanations are necessary. Recall the scene of soap fetched for the mother just described. Hanging up the flint-lock and running to the store implies forgetfulness of self for the sake of another. This is a perfect characterisation, rendering on the one hand the naïve directness of the man still half a child, on the other his awakening sense of duty.

Another example, from the film *The Leather Pushers*. The incident is as follows. A man sitting at a table is waiting for his friend. He is smoking a cigarette, and in front of him on the table stand an ash-tray and a glass half empty of liquid, both filled

with an enormous number of cigarette ends. The spectator immediately visualises the great space of time the man has been waiting and, no less, the degree of excitement that has made him smoke nearly a hundred cigarettes.

From the examples quoted above it will be clear what is to be understood by the term : expressive plastic material. We have found here a kitten, a tramp, a stone, a flint-lock, some cigarette ends, and not one of these objects or persons was introduced by chance ; each constitutes a visual image, requiring no explanation and yet carrying a clear and definite meaning.

Hence an important rule for the scenarist : in working out each incident he must carefully consider and select each visual image ; he must remember that for each concept, each idea, there may be tens and hundreds of possible means of plastic expression, and that it is his task to select from amongst them the clearest and most vivid. Special attention, however, must be paid to the special part played in pictures by objects. Relationships between human beings are, for the most part, illuminated by conversations, by words ; no one carries on conversation with objects, and that is why work with them, being expressed by visual action, is of special interest to the film technician, as we have just seen in these examples. Try to imagine to yourself anger, joy, confusion, sorrow, and so forth expressed not in words and the gestures accompanying them, but in action connected with objects, and you will see how



images saturated with plastic expression come into your mind. Work on plastic material is of the highest importance for the scenarist. In the process of it he learns to imagine to himself what he has written as it will appear upon the screen, and the knowledge thus acquired is essential for correct and fruitful work.

One must try to express one's concepts in 'clear and vivid visual images. Suppose it be a matter of the characterisation of some person of the action—this person must be placed in such conditions as will make him appear, by means of some action or movement, in the desired light (remember the tramp and the kitten). Suppose it be a matter of the representation of some event—those scenes must be assembled that most vividly emphasise visually the essence of the event represented.

In relation to what we have said, we must turn to the question of sub-titles. The usual view of titles as an invading, adventitious element, to be avoided wherever possible, is fundamentally erroneous. The title is an organic part of the film and, consequently, of the scenario. Naturally a title can be superfluous; but only in the sense in which a whole scene can be superfluous. According to their content titles can be divided into two groups :

### *CONTINUITY TITLES*

Titles of this kind give the spectator a necessary explanation in short and clear form, and thus

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continuity titles we must emphasise once again the following: the continuity title is only good if it removes the superfluous from the scenario, if it shortly explains essentials to the spectator and prepares him for clearer apprehension of the subsequent action (as in the example with the tramps). A continuity title must never be stronger than the subsequent image of the action (as in the example of Olga leaving her husband).<sup>13</sup>

### *SPOKEN TITLES*

This kind of title introduces living, spoken speech into the picture. Of their significance not much need be said. The main consideration affecting them is: good literary treatment and, certainly, as much compression as possible.<sup>14</sup> One must consider that, on the average, every line of title (two to three words) requires three feet of film.<sup>15</sup> Consequently a title twelve words long stays on the screen from twelve to eighteen seconds, and can, by a temporal interruption of this kind, destroy the rhythm, and with it the sequence and impression, of the current shots.

*Clarity* is as important for the spoken as for the continuity title. Superfluous words that may enhance the literary beauty of the sentence but will complicate its rapid comprehension are not permissible. The film spectator has no time to savour words. The title must "get" to the spectator quickly—in the course of the process of being read.

To what has been said must be added that in construction of the scenario one must be careful of the distribution of the titles. A continual, even interruption of the action by titles is not desirable. It is better to try to distribute them (this is especially important with continuity titles) so that by concentrating them in one part of the scenario the remainder is left free for development of the action. Thus work the Americans, giving all the necessary explanations in the early reels, strengthening the middle by use of more spoken titles, and at the end, in quicker tempo, carrying through the bare action to the finish without titles.

It is interesting to note that, apart from its literal content, the title may have also a plastic content. For example, often large, distinct lettering is used, the importance of the word being associated with the size of the letters with which it is formed. An example—in the propaganda film *Famine* there was an end title as follows: first appeared in normal size the first word "Comrades"; it disappeared and was replaced by a larger "Brothers"; and finally appeared the third—filling the whole screen—"Help!" Such a title was undoubtedly more effective than an ordinary one. Consideration of the plastic size of the title is undoubtedly very interesting, and this the scenarist should remember.<sup>10</sup> Yet more important than the plastic aspect of a title is its rhythmic significance. We have already said that too long titles must not be used. This is not all; it must be borne in mind that with the length of a

title must be considered the speed of the action in which it appears. Rapid action demands short, abrupt titles<sup>17</sup>; long-drawn-out action can be linked only with slow ones.

#### THE SIMPLEST SPECIFIC METHODS OF SHOOTING

Having learned the nature of plastic material, we must gain a knowledge of some of the purely formal methods used by the director and cameraman in shooting the picture. The simplest of these are as follows:

*Fade-in*<sup>18</sup>: The screen is entirely dark; as it becomes lighter the picture is disclosed.

*Fade-out*: The reverse process—the darkening of the picture until it has disappeared.

The fade has mainly a rhythmic significance. The slow withdrawal of the picture from the view-field of the spectator corresponds, in contradistinction to its usual sudden breaking-off, to the slow withdrawal of the spectator from the scene. One usually ends a sequence with a fade-out, especially when the scene itself has been carried out in retarded tempo. For example: a man exhaustedly approaches an armchair, lowers himself into it, drops his head in his hands—pause—slowly the shutter closes.

The fade-in is, on the contrary, equivalent to the purposeful introduction of the spectator to a new environment and new action. It is used to begin a film, or a separate sequence. In determining the

general rhythm of the action one should indicate the speed of the fade: quick, slow. Often shots are bounded by a fade-in and fade-out—that is to say, the scene begins with the opening and ends with the closing of the shutter. By the use of this method is achieved the emphasis of an incident divorced from the general line of the scenario—very often, for example, this method is used for a refrain (*leit-motif*) or a flash-back. The fade can take various forms. A common form, now old-fashioned, is the round iris. At an iris-in there appears upon the dark screen a spot of light, disclosing the picture as it broadens.<sup>19</sup> Other forms of shutter are, for example, an iris like a widening or narrowing slit, a falling or rising horizontal shutter, vertical side shutters, and so forth. It should be mentioned, however, that the frequent use of various irises and shutters<sup>20</sup> is unnecessarily trying to the spectator.

*Shots in iris or in mask.*—The screen is darkened except for a light opening in the centre, round or otherwise in shape. The action takes place in this opening. This is a so-called “mask.” Its employment has various meanings. The most common is its use to let the spectator see from the viewpoint of the hero—for example, the hero looks through a keyhole; there appears what he sees, shown in a mask shaped like a keyhole. A field-glass-shaped mask can also be used, and so forth.

It is interesting to note the special use of a small, round mask (a stationary iris), often used in American films. For example: (a) The hero

stands on a hill and gazes into the distance. (b) A road taken from far off is shown in a little round mask; along the road gallops a horse. A dual object is attained with this kind of shot: in the first place, by the narrowing of the field of view the attention of the spectator becomes concentrated on that which the hero is looking at; in the second place, the small scale by which the impression of distance is maintained is not lost.

*The Mix.*—The transition from one section of the film to another is effected not by the usual cut, but gradually—that is to say, one image disappears slowly and another appears in its place. This method has also a mainly rhythmic significance. Mixes involve a slow rhythm. Often they are used in the representation of a flash-back, as if imitating the birth of one idea from another.


It is necessary to warn the scenarist against over-use of mixes. Technically, in making a mix, the cameraman, after having taken the one shot, must immediately begin to take the other, which is not always possible. If, for example, in a scenario the action is indicated as follows: the Spasskaia Tower (Moscow) mix to the Isaakievski Cathedral (Leningrad), it means that after taking the tower the cameraman must proceed immediately to Leningrad.<sup>21</sup>

*The Panorama (Pan).*—In shooting, the camera is given an even movement sideways, upwards, or downwards.<sup>22</sup> The lens of the camera turns to follow the object shot as it moves before it, or glides

along the object showing various parts of it one after the other. This is a purely technical method, and its significance is obvious.

*Forward or Backward Movement (Tracking or Trolleying).*—The camera approaches or becomes distant from the object during the shot. This method is nowadays scarcely ever used.<sup>23</sup> It gives a gradual transition from long-shot to close-up, and the reverse.

*Shots Out of Focus.*—In the latest American films one often notices sections (especially faces in close-up) taken so that the outlines appear slightly indistinct.<sup>24</sup> This method undoubtedly gives a special colour of softness and "tenderness," especially in scenes of lyric character, but it must be considered as a specific æsthetic method devoid of general application.

Everything said here regarding simple methods of taking shots has certainly only information value. What particular method of shooting is to be used, only his own taste and his own finer feelings can tell the scenarist. Here are no rules; the field for new invention and combination is wide. 

## METHODS OF TREATMENT OF THE MATERIAL

### *(Structural Editing)*

A cinematograph film, and consequently also a scenario, is always divided into a great number of separate pieces (more correctly, it is built out of these pieces). The sum of the shooting-script is



led into sequences, each sequence into scenes,<sup>11</sup> finally, the scenes themselves are constructed from a whole series of pieces (script-scenes) shot from various angles. An actual scenario, ready for shooting, must take into account this basic property of the film. The scenarist must be able to place his material on paper exactly as it will appear on the screen, thus giving exactly the content of a shot as well as its position in sequence. The construction of a scene from pieces, a sequence from scenes, and reel from sequences, and so forth, is called *editing*. Editing is one of the most significant instruments of effect possessed by the film technician, and, therefore, by the scenarist also. Let us now become acquainted with its methods one by one.

#### EDITING OF THE SCENE

Everyone familiar with a film is familiar with the expression "close-up." The alternating representation of the faces of the characters during a dialogue; the representation of hands, or feet, filling the whole screen—all this is familiar to everyone. But in order to know how properly to use the close-up, one must understand its significance, which is as follows: the close-up directs the attention of the spectator to that detail which is, at the moment, important to the course of the action. For instance, three persons are taking part in a scene. Suppose the significance of this scene consists in the general course of the action (if, for example, all three are lifting some heavy object), then they are taken

simultaneously in a *general* view, the so-called long-shot. But suppose any one of them change to an independent action having significance in the scenario (for example, separating himself from the others, he draws a revolver cautiously from his pocket), then the camera is directed on him alone. His action is recorded separately.

What is said above applies not only to persons, but also to separate parts of a person, and objects. Let us suppose a man is to be taken apparently listening calmly to the conversation of someone else, but actually restraining his anger with difficulty. The man crushes the cigarette he holds in his hand, a gesture unnoticed by the other. This hand will always be shown on the screen separately, in close-up, otherwise the spectator will not notice it and a characteristic detail will be missed. The view formerly obtained (and is still held by some) that the close-up is an "interruption" of the long-shot. This idea is entirely false. It is no sort of interruption. It represents a proper form of construction.

In order to make clear to oneself the nature of the process of editing a scene, one may draw the following analogy. Imagine yourself observing a scene unfolded in front of you, thus: a man stands near the wall of a house and turns his head to the left; there appears another man slinking cautiously through the gate. The two are fairly widely distant from one another—they stop. The first takes some object and shows it to the other, mocking him. The latter clenches his fists in a rage and throws himself

At this moment a woman looks out on the third floor and calls, "Police!"  
 The antagonists run off in opposite directions.  
 Could this have been observed?  
 The observer looks at the first man. He turns

Is he looking at? The observer turns in the same direction and sees the man at the gate. The latter stops.  
 Does the first react to the appearance on the part of the second? A new turn by the observer; the first takes out an object and mocks the second.

How does the second react? Another turn; he strikes his fists and throws himself on his opponent.  
 The observer draws aside to watch how both antagonists roll about fighting.

A shout from above. The observer raises his head and sees the woman shouting at the window.  
 The observer lowers his head and sees the result of the warning—the antagonists running off in opposite directions.

The observer happened to be standing near and saw every detail, saw it clearly, but to do so he had to turn his head, first left, then right, then upwards, and hitherto his attention was attracted by the interest of observation and the sequence of the developing scene. Suppose he had been standing farther away from the action, taking in the two antagonists and the window on the third floor simultaneously, he would have received only a general

impression, without being able to look separately at the first, the second, or the woman. Here we have approached closely the basic significance of editing. Its object is the showing of the development of the scene in relief, as it were, by guiding the attention of the spectator now to one, now to the other separate element. The lens of the camera replaces the eye of the observer, and the changes of angle of the camera—directed now on one person, now on another, now on one detail, now on another—must be subject to the same conditions as those of the eyes of the observer. The film technician, in order to secure the greatest clarity, emphasis, and vividness, shoots the scene in separate pieces and, joining them and showing them, directs the attention of the spectator to the separate elements, compelling him to see as the attentive observer saw. From the above is clear the manner in which editing can even work upon the emotions. Imagine to yourself the excited observer of some rapidly developing scene. His agitated glance is thrown rapidly from one spot to another. If we imitate this glance with the camera we get a series of pictures, rapidly alternating pieces, creating a *stirring scenario editing-construction*. The reverse would be long pieces changing by mixes, conditioning a calm and slow editing-construction (as one may shoot, for example, a herd of cattle wandering along a road, taken from the viewpoint of a pedestrian on the same road).

We have established, by these instances, the basic significance of the constructive editing of scenes.

It builds the scenes from separate pieces, of which each concentrates the attention of the spectator only on that element important to the action. The sequence of these pieces must not be uncontrolled, but must correspond to the natural transference of attention of an imaginary observer (who, in the end, is represented by the spectator). In this sequence must be expressed a special logic that will be apparent only if each shot contain an impulse towards transference of the attention to the next. For example (1) A man turns his head and looks ; (2) What he looks at is shown.

#### EDITING OF THE SEQUENCE

The guidance of the attention of the spectator to different elements of the developing action in succession is, in general, characteristic of the film. It is its basic method. We have seen that the separate scene, and often even the movement of one man, is built up upon the screen from separate pieces. Now, the film is not simply a collection of different scenes. Just as the pieces are built up into scenes endowed, as it were, with a connected action, so the separate scenes are assembled into groups forming whole sequences. The sequence is constructed (edited) from scenes. Let us suppose ourselves faced with the task of constructing the following sequence : two spies are creeping forward to blow up a powder magazine ; on the way one of them loses a letter with instructions. Someone else finds the letter and warns the guard, who appear

in time to arrest the spies and save the magazine. Here the scenarist has to deal with simultaneity of various actions in several different places. While the spies are crawling towards the magazine, someone else finds the letter and hastens to warn the guard. The spies have nearly reached their objective; the guards are warned and rushing towards the magazine. The spies have completed their preparations; the guard arrives in time. If we pursue the previous analogy between the camera and an observer, we now not only have to turn it from side to side, but also to move it from place to place. The observer (the camera) is now on the road shadowing the spies, now in the guardroom recording the confusion, now back at the magazine showing the spies at work, and so forth. But, in combination of the separate scenes (editing), the former law of sequence succession remains in force. A consecutive sequence will appear upon the screen only if the attention of the spectator be transferred correctly from scene to scene. And this correctness is conditioned as follows: the spectator sees the creeping spies, the loss of the letter, and finally the person who finds the letter. The person with the letter rushes for help. The spectator is seized with inevitable excitement—Will the man who found the letter be able to forestall the explosion? The scenarist immediately answers by showing the spies nearing the magazine—his answer has the effect of a warning "Time is short." The excitement of the spectator—Will they be in time?—continues; the

scenarist shows the guard turning out. Time is very short—the spies are shown beginning their work. Thus, transferring attention now to the rescuers, now to the spies, the scenarist answers with actual impulses to increase of the spectator's interest, and the construction (editing) of the sequence is correctly achieved.

There is a law in psychology that lays it down that if an emotion give birth to a certain movement, by imitation of this movement the corresponding emotion can be called forth. If the scenarist can effect in even rhythm the transference of interest of the intent spectator, if he can so construct the elements of increasing interest that the question, "What is happening at the other place?" arises and at the same moment the spectator is transferred whither he wishes to go, then the editing thus created can really excite the spectator. One must learn to understand that editing is in actual fact a compulsory and deliberate guidance of the thoughts and associations of the spectator. If the editing be merely an uncontrolled combination of the various pieces, the spectator will understand (apprehend) nothing from it; but if it be co-ordinated according to a definitely selected course of events or conceptual line, either agitated or calm, it will either excite or soothe the spectator.

#### EDITING OF THE SCENARIO <sup>24</sup>

The film is divided into reels. The reels are usually equal in length, on an average from 900 to

1,200 feet long. The combination of the reels forms the picture. The usual length of a picture should not be more than from 6,500 to 7,500 feet. This length, as yet, involves no unnecessary exhaustion of the spectator. The film is usually divided into from six to eight reels. It should be noted here, as a practical hint, that the average length of a piece (remember the editing of scenes) is from 6 to 10 feet, and consequently from 100 to 150 pieces go to a reel. By orientating himself on these figures, the scenarist can visualise how much material can be fitted into the scenario. The scenario is composed of a series of sequences. In discussing the construction (editing) of the scenario from sequences, we introduce a new element into the scenarist's work—the element of so-called dramatic continuity of action that was discussed at the beginning of this sketch. The continuity of the separate sequences when joined together depends not merely upon the simple transference of attention from one place to another, but is conditioned by the development of the action forming the foundation of the scenario. It is important, however, to remind the scenarist of the following point: a scenario has always in its development a moment of greatest tension, found nearly always at the end of the film. To prepare the spectator, or, more correctly, preserve him, for this final tension, it is especially important to see that he is not affected by unnecessary exhaustion during the course of the film. A method, already discussed, that the scenarist can



employ to this end is the careful distribution of the titles (which always distract the spectator), securing compression of the greater quantity of them into the first reels, and leaving the last one for uninterrupted action.

Thus, first is worked out the action of the scenario, the action is then worked out into sequences, the sequences into scenes, and these constructed by editing from the pieces, each corresponding to a camera angle.

#### EDITING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF IMPRESSION

##### *(Relational Editing)*

We have already mentioned, in the section on editing of sequences, that editing is not merely a method of the junction of separate scenes or pieces, but is a method that controls the "psychological guidance" of the spectator. We should now acquaint ourselves with the main special editing methods having as their aim the impression of the spectator.

*Contrast.*—Suppose it be our task to tell of the miserable situation of a starving man; the story will impress the more vividly if associated with mention of the senseless gluttony of a well-to-do man.

On just such a simple contrast relation is based the corresponding editing method. On the screen the impression of this contrast is yet increased, for it is possible not only to relate the starving sequence to the gluttony sequence, but also to relate separate

scenes and even separate shots of the scenes to one another, thus, as it were, forcing the spectator to compare the two actions all the time, one strengthening the other. The editing of contrast is one of the most effective, but also one of the commonest and most standardised, of methods, and so care should be taken not to overdo it.

*Parallelism.*—This method resembles contrast, but is considerably wider. Its substance can be explained more clearly by an example. In a scenario as yet unproduced a section occurs as follows. a working man, one of the leaders of a strike, is condemned to death; the execution is fixed for 5 a.m. The sequence is edited thus: a factory-owner, employer of the condemned man, is leaving a restaurant drunk, he looks at his wrist-watch: 4 o'clock. The accused is shown—he is being made ready to be led out. Again the manufacturer, he rings a door-bell to ask the time: 4.30. The prison waggon drives along the street under heavy guard. The maid who opens the door—the wife of the condemned—is subjected to a sudden senseless assault. The drunken factory-owner snores on a bed, his leg with trouser-end upturned, his hand hanging down with wrist-watch visible, the hands of the watch crawl slowly to 5 o'clock. The workman is being hanged. In this instance two thematically unconnected incidents develop in parallel by means of the watch that tells of the approaching execution. The watch on the wrist of the callous brute, as it were connects him with the

chief protagonist of the approaching tragic *dénouement*, thus ever present in the consciousness of the spectator. This is undoubtedly an interesting method, capable of considerable development.

*Symbolism*.—In the final scenes of the film *Strike* the shooting down of workmen is punctuated by shots of the slaughter of a bull in a stockyard. The scenarist, as it were, desires to say : just as a butcher sells a bull with the swing of a pole-axe, so, cruelly and in cold blood, were shot down the workers. This method is especially interesting because, by means of editing, it introduces an abstract concept into the consciousness of the spectator without use of a title.

*Simultaneity*.—In American films the final section is constructed from the simultaneous rapid development of two actions, in which the outcome of one depends on the outcome of the other. The end of the present-day section of *Intolerance*, already quoted, is thus constructed.<sup>17</sup> The whole aim of this method is to create in the spectator a maximum tension of excitement by the constant forcing of a question, such as, in this case : Will they be in time?—will they be in time?

The method is a purely emotional one, and nowadays overdone almost to the point of boredom, but it cannot be denied that of all the methods of constructing the end hitherto devised it is the most effective.

*Leit-motif (reiteration of theme)*.—Often it is interesting for the scenarist especially to emphasise the

basic theme of the scenario. For this purpose exists the method of reiteration. Its nature can easily be demonstrated by an example. In an anti-religious scenario that aimed at exposing the cruelty and hypocrisy of the Church in employ of the Tsarist régime the same shot was several times repeated: a church-bell slowly ringing and, superimposed on it, the title: "The sound of bells sends into the world a message of patience and love." This piece appeared whenever the scenarist desired to emphasise the stupidity of patience, or the hypocrisy of the love thus preached.

The little that has been said above of relational editing naturally by no means exhausts the whole abundance of its methods. It has merely been important to show that constructional editing, a method specifically and peculiarly filmic, is, in the hands of the scenarist, an important instrument of impression. Careful study of its use in pictures, combined with talent, will undoubtedly lead to the discovery of new possibilities and, in conjunction with them, to the creation of new forms.

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## II

# FILM DIRECTOR AND FILM MATERIAL

### PART I

## THE PECULIARITIES OF FILM MATERIAL

### THE FILM AND THE THEATRE

**I**N the earliest years of its existence the film was no more than an interesting invention that made it possible to record movements, a faculty denied to simple photography. On the film, the appearances of all possible movements could be seized and fixed. The first films consisted of primitive attempts to fix upon the celluloid, as a novelty, the movements of a train, crowds passing by upon the street, a landscape seen from a railway-carriage window, and so forth. Thus, in the beginning, the film was, from its nature, only "living photography." The first attempts to relate cinematography to the world of art were naturally bound up with the Theatre. Similarly only as a novelty, like the shots of the railway-engine and the moving sea, primitive scenes of comic or dramatic character, played by actors, began to be recorded. The film public appeared. There grew up a whole series of relatively small, specialised theatres in which these primitive films were shown.

The film now began to assume all the characteristics of an industry (and indeed a very profitable



scene through in its exact theatrical sequence ; he recorded the walkings to and fro, the entrances and exits of the actors. He took the scene thus played-through as a whole, while the cameraman, always turning, fixed it as a whole upon the celluloid. The process of shooting could not be conceived of otherwise, for as director's material served these same real persons—actors—with whom one worked also in the Theatre ; the camera served only for the simple fixation of scenes already completely arranged and definitely planned. The pieces of film shot were stuck together in simple temporal sequence of the developing action, just as the act of a play is formed from scenes, and then were presented to the public as a picture. To sum up in short, the work of the film director differed in no wise from that of the theatrical producer.

A play, exactly recorded upon celluloid and projected upon a screen, with the actors deprived of their words—that was the film of those early days.

#### THE METHODS OF THE FILM

The *Americans* were the first to discover in the film-play the presence of peculiar possibilities of its own. It was perceived that the film can not only make a simple record of the events passing before the lens, but that it is in a position to reproduce them upon the screen by special methods, proper only to itself.

Let us take as example a demonstration that flies by upon the street. Let us picture to ourselves an observer of that demonstration. In order to receive





*mid-shot*, and *long-shot* first appeared in cinematography, concepts that later played an enormous part in the creative craft of editing, the basis of the work of film direction. Now, for the first time, became apparent the difference between the theatrical producer and his colleague of the film. In the beginning the material with which both theatrical producer and film director worked was *identical*. The same actors playing through in their same sequence the same scenes, which were but shorter, and, at the most, unaccompanied by words. The technique of acting for the films differed in no respect from that of stage-acting. The only problem was the replacement, as comprehensibly as possible, of words by gestures. That was the time when the film was rightly named "a substitute for the stage."

#### FILM AND REALITY

But, with the grasping of the concept *editing*, the position became basically altered. The real material of film-art proved to be not those actual scenes on which the lens of the camera is directed. The theatrical producer has always to do only with *real* processes—they are his material. His finally composed and created work—the scene produced and played upon the stage—is equally a real and actual process, that takes place in obedience to the laws of *real space* and *real time*. When a stage-actor finds himself at one end of the stage, he cannot cross to the other without taking a certain necessary number of paces. And crossings and intervals of this kind are

a clear and definite impression of the demonstration, the observer must perform certain actions. First he must climb upon the roof of a house, to get a view from above of the procession as a whole and measure its dimensions ; next he must come down and look out through the first-floor window at the inscriptions on the banners carried by the demonstrators ; finally, he must mingle with the crowd, to gain an idea of the outward appearance of the participants.

Three times the observer has altered his viewpoint, gazing now from nearer, now from farther away, with the purpose of acquiring as complete and exhaustive as possible a picture of the phenomenon under review. The Americans were the first to seek to replace an active observer of this kind by means of the *camera*. They showed in their work that it was not only possible to record the scene shot, but that by manœuvring with the camera itself—in such a way that its position in relation to the object shot varied several times—it was made possible to reproduce the same scene in far clearer and more expressive form than with the lens playing the part of a theatre spectator sitting fast in his stall. The camera, until now a motionless spectator, at last received, as it were, a charge of *life*. It acquired the faculty of movement on its own, and transformed itself from a *spectator* to an active *observer*. Henceforward the camera, controlled by the director, could not merely enable the spectator to see the object shot, but could induce him to apprehend it.

It was at this moment that the concepts *close-up*,

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a thing indispensable, conditioned by the laws of real space and real time, with which the theatrical producer has always to reckon, and which he is never in a position to overstep. In fact, in work with real processes, a whole series of *intervals* linking the separate significant points of action are unavoidable.

If, on the other hand, we consider the work of the film director, then it appears that the active raw material is no other than those *pieces of celluloid* on which, from various viewpoints, the separate movements of the action have been shot. From nothing but these pieces is created those appearances upon the screen that form the filmic representation of the action shot. And thus the material of the film director consists not of real processes happening in real space and real time, but of those pieces of celluloid on which these processes have been recorded. This celluloid is entirely subject to the will of the director who edits it. He can, in the composition of the filmic form of any given appearance, eliminate all points of interval, and thus concentrate the action in time to the highest degree he may require.

This method of *temporal concentration*, the concentration of action by the elimination of unnecessary points of interval, occurs also, in a more simplified form, in the Theatre. It finds its expression in the construction of a play from acts. The element of play-construction by which several years are made to pass between the first and second act is, properly, an analogous temporal concentration of the action. In the film this method is not only pursued to a

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maximum, it forms the actual *basis* of filmic representation. Though it is possible for the theatrical producer temporally to approach two neighbouring acts, he is, none the less, unable to do the same with separate incidents in a single scene <sup>29</sup>

The film director, on the contrary, can concentrate in time not only separate incidents, but even the movements of a single person. This process, that has often been termed a "film trick," is, in fact, nothing other than the characteristic method of filmic representation.

In order to show on the screen the fall of a man from a window five stories high, the shots can be taken in the following way :

First the man is shot falling from the window into a net, in such a way that the net is not visible on the screen <sup>30</sup> ; then the same man is shot falling from a slight height to the ground. Joined together, the two shots give in projection the desired impression. The catastrophic fall never occurs in reality, it occurs only on the screen, and is the resultant of two pieces of celluloid joined together. From the event of a real, actual fall of a person from an appalling height, two points only are selected : the beginning of the fall and its end. The intervening passage through the air is eliminated. It is not correct to call the process a trick ; it is a method of filmic representation exactly corresponding to the elimination of the five years that divide a first act from a second upon the stage.

From the example of the observer watching the

demonstration pass by on the street, we learned that the process of film-shooting may be not only a simple *fixation* of the event taking place before the lens, but also a *peculiar form* of representation of this event. Between the natural event and its appearance upon the screen there is a marked difference. It is *exactly this difference that makes the film an art*. Guided by the director, the camera assumes the task of removing every superfluity and directing the attention of the spectator in such a way that he shall see only that which is significant and characteristic. When the demonstration was shot, the camera, after having viewed the crowd from above in the long-shot, forced its way into the press and picked out the most characteristic details. These details were not the result of chance, they were selected, and, moreover, selected in such a way that from their sum, as from a sum of separate elements, the image of the whole action could be assembled. Let us suppose, for instance, that the demonstration to be recorded is characterised by its component detail: first Red soldiers, then workmen, and finally Pioneers.<sup>11</sup> Suppose the film technician try to show the spectator the detail composition of this demonstration by simply setting the camera at a fixed point and letting the crowd go by unbroken before the lens, then he will force the spectator to spend exactly as much time in watching the representation as he would have needed to let the crowd itself go by. By taking the procession in this way he would force the spectator to apprehend the mass of detail as it streamed



past. But, by the use of that method peculiar to films, three short pieces can be taken separately: the Red soldiers, the workmen, and the Pioneers. The combination of these separate pieces with the general view of the crowd provides an image of the demonstration from which no element is lacking. The spectator is enabled to appreciate both its composition and its dimension, only the time in which he effects that appreciation is altered.

#### FILMIC SPACE AND TIME

Created by the camera, obedient to the will of the director—after the cutting and joining of the separate pieces of celluloid—there arises a new *filmic* time; not that real time embraced by the phenomenon as it takes place before the camera, but a new *filmic* time, conditioned only by the speed of perception and controlled by the number and duration of the separate elements selected for filmic representation of the action.

Every action takes place not only in time, but also in space. Filmic time is distinguished from actual in that it is dependent only on the lengths of the separate pieces of celluloid joined together by the director. Like time, so also is filmic space bound up with the chief process of film-making, editing. By the junction of the separate pieces the director builds a filmic space entirely his own. He unites and compresses separate elements, that have perhaps been recorded by him at differing points of real, actual space, into one *filmic* space. By virtue of the



Cathedral. What happened as a result? Though the shooting had been done in varied locations, the spectator perceived the scene as a whole. The parts of real space picked out by the camera appeared concentrated, as it were, upon the screen. There resulted what Kuleshov termed "creative geography." By the process of junction of pieces of celluloid appeared a new, filmic space without existence in reality. Buildings separated by a distance of thousands of miles were concentrated to a space that could be covered by a few paces of the actors.

#### THE MATERIAL OF FILMS

We have now established the chief points in the difference between the work of the film director and that of the theatrical producer. This difference lies in the distinction of material. The theatrical producer works with real actuality, which, though he may always remould, yet forces him to remain bound by the laws of real space and real time. The film director, on the other hand, has as his material the finished, recorded celluloid. This material from which his final work is composed consists not of living men or real landscapes, not of real, actual stage-sets, but only of their images, recorded on separate strips that can be shortened, altered, and assembled according to his will. The elements of reality are fixed on these pieces; by combining them in his selected sequence, shortening and lengthening them according to his desire, the director builds up his own "filmic" time and "filmic" space. He

does not adapt reality, but uses it for the creation of a new reality, and the most characteristic and important aspect of this process is that, in it, laws of space and time invariable and inescapable in work with actuality become tractable and obedient. The film assembles the elements of reality to build from them a new reality proper only to itself; and the laws of space and time, that, in work with living men, with sets and the footage of the stage, are fixed and fast, are, in the film, entirely altered. Filmic space and filmic time, the creation of the technician, are entirely subject to the director. The basic method of filmic representation, this construction of the unity of a film from separate pieces or elements, the superfluous among which can be eliminated and *only the characteristic and significant retained*, offers exceptional possibilities.

Everyone knows that the nearer we approach a regarded object, the less material appears simultaneously in our view-field; the more clearly our investigating glance examines an object, the more details we perceive and the more limited and sectional becomes our view. We no longer perceive the object as a whole, but pick out the details with our glance in order, thus receiving by association an impression of the whole that is far more vivid, deeper, and sharper than if we had gazed at the object from a distance and perceived the whole in a general view, inevitably missing detail in so doing. When we wish to apprehend anything, we always begin with the general outlines, and then, by

intensifying our examination to the highest degree, enrich the apprehension by an ever-increasing number of details. The particular, the detail, will always be a synonym of intensification. It is upon this that the strength of the film depends, that its characteristic speciality is the possibility of giving a clear, especially vivid representation of detail. The power of filmic representation lies in the fact that, by means of the camera, it continually strives to penetrate as deeply as possible, to the mid-point of every image. The camera, as it were, forces itself, ever striving, into the profoundest deeps of life ; it strives thither to penetrate, whither the average spectator never reaches as he glances casually around him. The camera goes deeper ; anything it can see it approaches, and thereafter eternalises upon the celluloid. When we approach a given, real image, we must spend a definite effort and time upon it, in advancing from the general to the particular, in intensifying our attention to that point at which we begin to remark and apprehend details. By the process of editing the film removes, eliminates, this effort. The film spectator is an ideal, perspicuous observer. And it is the director who makes him so. In the discovered, deeply embedded detail there lies an element of perception, the creative element that characterises as art the work of man, the sole element that gives the event shown its final worth.

To show something as everyone sees it is to have accomplished *nothing*. Not that material that is embraced in a first, casual, merely general :

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To show something as everyone sees it is to have accomplished *nothing*. Not that material that is embraced in a first, casual, merely general and

superficial glance is required, but that which closes itself to an intent and searching glance, that can and will see deeper. This is the reason why the greatest artists, those technicians who feel the film most acutely, deepen their work with details. To do this they discard the general aspect of the image, and the points of interval that are the inevitable concomitant of every natural event. The theatrical producer, in working with his material, is not in a position to remove from the view of the spectator that background, that mass of general and inevitable outline, that surrounds the characteristic and particular details. He can only underline the most essential, leaving the spectator himself to concentrate upon what he underlines. The film technician, equipped with his camera, is infinitely more powerful. The attention of the spectator is entirely in his hands. The lens of the camera is the eye of the spectator. He sees and remarks only that which the director desires to show him, or, more correctly put, that which the director himself sees in the action concerned.

#### ANALYSIS

In the disappearance of the general, obvious outline and the appearance on the screen of some deeply hidden detail, filmic representation attains the highest point of its power of external expression. The film, by showing him the detail without its background, releases the spectator from the unnecessary task of eliminating superfluities from his view-field.



By eliminating distraction it spares the spectator's energy, and reaches thereby the clearest and most marked effect. As example we shall take some instances from well-known films in which notable directors have attained great strength of expression.

As example, the trial scene in Griffith's *Intolerance*. Here there is a scene in which a woman hears the death sentence passed on her husband, who is innocent of the crime. The director shows the face of the woman : an anxious, trembling smile through tears. Suddenly the spectator sees for an instant her hands, only her hands, the fingers convulsively gripping the skin. This is one of the most powerful moments in the film. Not for a minute did we see the whole figure, but only the face, and the hands. And it is perhaps by virtue of this fact that the director understood how to choose and to show, from the mass of real material available, only these two characteristic details, that he attained the wonderful power of impression notable in this scene. Here once more we encounter the process, mentioned above, of clear selection, the possibility of the elimination of those insignificances that fulfil only a transition function and are always inseparable from reality, and of the retention only of climactic and dramatic points. Exactly upon this possibility depends the essence of the significance of editing, the basic process of filmic creation. Confusion by linkage and wastage by intervals are inevitable attributes of reality. When a spectator is dealing with actuality he can overcome them only by a given

effort of attention. He rests his glance on a face then lets it glide down the body until finally it rests attentively on the hands—this is what a spectator has to do when looking at a real woman in real surroundings.

The *film* spares this work of stopping and downward-gliding. Thus the spectator spends no superfluous energy. By elimination of the points of interval the director endows the spectator with the energy preserved, he charges him, and thus the appearance assembled from a series of significant details is stronger in force of expression from the screen than is the appearance in actuality.

We now perceive that the work of the film director has a double character. For the construction of filmic form he requires proper material ; if he wishes to work filmically, he cannot and must not record reality as it presents itself to the actual, average onlooker. To create a filmic form, he must select those elements from which this form will later be assembled. To assemble these elements, he must first find them. And now we hit on the necessity for a special process of analysis of every real event that the director wishes to use in a shot. For every event a process has to be carried out comparable to the process in mathematics termed " differentiation "—that is to say, dissection into parts or elements. Here the technique of observation links up with the creative process of the selection of the characteristic elements necessary for the future finished work. In order to represent the woman in the court scene,

Griffith probably imagined, he may even have actually seen, dozens of despairing women, and perceived not only their heads and hands, but he selected from the whole images only the smile through tears and the convulsive hands, creating from them an unforgettable filmic picture.

Another example. In that filmically outstanding work, *The Battleship "Potemkin,"*<sup>22</sup> Eisenstein shot the massacre of the mob on the great flight of steps in Odessa.<sup>23</sup> The running of the mob down the steps is rendered rather sparingly and is not especially expressive, but the perambulator with the baby, which, loosed from the grip of the shot mother, rolls down the steps, is poignant in its tragic intensity and strikes with the force of a blow. This perambulator is a detail, just like the boy with the broken skull in the same film. Analytically dissected, the mass of people offered a wide field for the creative work of the director, and the details correctly discovered in editing resulted in episodes remarkable in their expressive power.

Another example, simpler, but quite characteristic for film-work: how should one show a motor-car accident?—a man being run over.

The real material is thoroughly abundant and complex. There is the street, the motor-car, the man crossing the street, the car running him down, the startled chauffeur, the brakes, the man under the wheels, the car carried forward by its impetus, and, finally, the corpse. In actuality everything occurs in unbroken sequence. How was this material

worked out by an American director in the film *Daddy*? The separate pieces were assembled on the screen in the following sequence :

1. The street with cars in movement : a pedestrian crosses the street with his back to the camera ; a passing motor-car hides him from view.
2. *Very short flash* : the face of the startled chauffeur as he steps on the brake.
3. *Equally short flash* : the face of the victim, his mouth open in a scream.
4. Taken from above, from the chauffeur's seat : legs, glimpsed near the revolving wheels.
5. The sliding, braked wheels of the car.
6. The corpse by the stationary car.

The separate pieces are cut together in short, very sharp rhythm. In order to represent the accident on the screen, the director dissected analytically the whole abundant scene, unbroken in actual development, into component parts, into elements, and selected from them—sparingly—only the six essential. And these not only prove sufficient, but render exhaustively the whole poignancy of the event represented.

In the work of the mathematician there follows after dissection into elements, after "differentiation," a combination of the discovered separate elements to a whole—the so-called "integration."

In the work of the film director the process of analysis, the dissection into elements, forms equally only a point of departure, which has to be followed by

the assemblage of the whole from the discovered parts. The finding of the elements, the details of the action, implies only the completion of a preparatory task. It must be remembered that from these parts the complete work is finally to emerge, for, as said above, the real motor-car accident might be dissected by the onlooker into dozens, perhaps indeed hundreds, of separate incidents. The director, however, chooses only six of them. He makes a selection, and this selection is naturally conditioned in advance by that filmic image of the accident—happening not in reality but on the screen—which, of course, exists in the head of the director long before its actual appearance on the screen.

#### EDITING : THE LOGIC OF FILMIC ANALYSIS

The work of the director is characterised by thinking in filmic pictures ; by imagining events in that form in which, composed of pieces joined together in a certain sequence, they will appear upon the screen ; by considering real incidents only as material from which to select separate characteristic elements ; and by building a new filmic reality out of them. Even when he has to do with real objects in real surroundings he thinks only of their appearances upon the screen. He never considers a real object in the sense of its actual, proper nature, but considers in it only those properties that can be carried over on to celluloid. The film director looks only *conditionally* upon his material, and this conditionality is extraordinarily specific ; it arises from a whole series of



the pieces be united in definite order. Every event takes place not only in space, but in time, and, just as filmic space is created, as we saw, by the junction in sequence of selected pieces, so must also be created, moulded from the elements of real time, a new filmic time. Let us suppose that, at the junction of the pieces shot to represent the accident, no thought has been given to their proportionate lengths ; in result the editing is as follows :

1. Someone crosses the street.
2. Long : the face of the chauffeur at his brake.
3. Equally long : the screaming, wide-open mouth of the victim.
4. The braked wheel and all the other pieces shown similarly in very long strips.

A reel of film cut in this way would, even in correct spacial sequence, appear absurd to the spectator. The car would appear to travel slowly. The inherently short process of running-over would be disproportionately and incomprehensibly drawn out. The *event* would disappear from the screen, leaving only the projection of some chance material. Only when the right length has been found for every piece, building a rapid, almost convulsive rhythm of picture alternation, analogous to the panic glance, thrown this way and that, of an observer mastered by horror, only then will the screen breathe a life of its own imparted to it by the director. And this is because the appearance created by the director is enclosed, not only in filmic space, but also in filmic

properties peculiar only to the film. Even while being shot, a film must be thought of already as an editable sequence of separate pieces of celluloid. The filmic form is never identical with the real appearance, but only similar to it. When the director *establishes the content and sequence of the separate elements* that he is to combine later to filmic form, he must calculate exactly not only the content, but the length of each piece, or, in other words, he must regard it as an element of filmic space and filmic time. Let us suppose that before us lie, haphazard on the table, those separate pieces of material that were shot to represent that scene of the motor-car accident described above. The essential thing is to unite these pieces and to join them into one long strip of film. Naturally we can join them in any desired order. Let us imagine an intentionally absurd order—for example, the following :

Beginning with the shot of the motor-car, we cut *into the middle of it the legs of the man run over*, then the man crossing the street, and finally the face of the chauffeur. The result is a senseless medley of pieces that produces in the spectator an impression of chaos. And rational order will only be brought into the alternation of pieces when they are at least conditioned by that sequence with which a chance observer would have been able to let his glance and attention wander from object to object ; only then will relation appear between the pieces, and their combination, having received organic unity, be effective on the screen. But it is not sufficient that



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time, integrated from elements of real time picked from actuality by the camera. *Editing is the language of the film director. Just as in living speech, so, one may say, in editing: there is a word—the piece of exposed film, the image; a phrase—the combination of these pieces. Only by his editing methods can one judge a director's individuality. Just as each writer has his own individual style, so each film director has his own individual method of representation. The editing junction of the pieces in creatively discovered sequence is already a final and completing process whose result is the attainment of a final creation, the finished film. And it is with this process in mind that the director must attend also to the formation of these most elementary of pieces (corresponding to the words in speech), from which later the edited phrases—the incidents and sequences—will be formed.*

#### THE NECESSITY TO INTERFERE WITH MOVEMENT

The organising work of the director is not limited to editing. Quite a number of film technicians maintain that editing should be the only organising medium of the film. They hold that the *pieces* can be shot anyhow and anywhere, the images must only be interesting; afterwards, by simply joining them according to their form and kind, a way will be found to assemble them to a film.<sup>34</sup> If any unifying idea be taken as basis of the editing, the material will no doubt be organised to a certain degree. A whole series of shots taken at hazard in Moscow can

be joined to a whole, and all the separate shots will be united by their place of taking—the town of Moscow. The spacial grasp of the camera can be narrowed to any desired degree ; a series of figures and happenings can be taken on the market-place and then finally in a room where a meeting is being held, and in all these shots there will undoubtedly be an organising embryo, but the question is how deeply it will be developed. Such a collection of shots can be compared to a newspaper, in which the enormous abundance of news is divided into sections and columns. The collection of news of all the happenings in the world, given in the newspaper, is organised and systematised. But this same news, used in an article or a book, is organised in an even higher degree. In the process of creating a film, the work of organisation can and must extend more widely and deeply than the mere establishment of a hard and fast editing scheme of representation. The separate pieces must be brought into organic relation with each other, and for this purpose their content must be considered in the shooting as a deepening, as an advancement, of the whole editing construction into the inner depth of each separate element of this construction.

In considering certain of our examples, we have had to deal with events and appearances that take place before the camera independent of the will of the director. The shooting of the demonstration was, after all, only a selection of scenes of real actuality, not created by the director, but picked out by him



has been present only in the head, in the imagination of the director, as he sought the necessary elements for the later filmic form.

Here we come to the consideration of that which must be shot in the limits of one uninterrupted piece of celluloid, in the limits of one "shot," as the technical term has it. Work in the limits of one shot is naturally dependent on real space and real time ; it is work with single elements of *filmic* space and *filmic* time ; and is naturally directly conditioned by the cutting later to be carried out. In order to arouse in the spectator the necessary excited impression, the director, in editing the motor-car accident, built up a disturbed rhythm, effected by the exceptionally short lengths of each single piece. But remember, the desired material cannot be got by merely cutting or abruptly shortening the pieces of celluloid ; the necessary length into which the content of each piece had to fit must have been borne in mind when it was shot. Let us suppose that it is our task to shoot and edit a disturbed, excited scene, that accordingly makes necessary quick change of the short pieces. In shooting, however, the scenes and parts of scenes are acted before the lens very slowly and lethargically. Then, in selecting the pieces and trying to edit them, we shall be faced by an insuperable obstacle. Short pieces must be used, but the action that takes place in the limits of each separate piece proves to be so slow that, to reach the necessary shortness of each piece, we must cut, remove part of the action ; while, if

to be shot. Suppose the director to be concerned only in making an industrial film (the work of a factory, large workshop, or institution), a subject which would appear to consist only in the fixation of a number of processes not requiring his interference as director, even so his work consists of something more than the simple setting up of the camera and shooting the machines and people at work from various angles. In order to finish up with a really filmically clear, editable representation, the director is, with each separate process he shoots, inevitably compelled to interrupt and interfere, guided by a clear perception of that editing sequence in which he will later project the pieces on the screen. The director must introduce into his work the element of direction, the element of a special organisation of every action shot, the goal of which organisation is the clearest and most exact possible recording of characteristic details.

But when we go on to the shooting of so-called "dramatic" subjects, then naturally the element of direction, the element of organisation of the material to be shot, becomes yet more important and indispensable. In order to shoot all the essentials of the filmic representation of the motor-car accident, the director had many times to alter the position of his camera; he had to make the motor-car, the chauffeur, and the victim carry out their separate and essential movements many times. In the direction of a dramatic film very often an event shown on the screen never had existence as a whole in reality. It



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we preserve the shots entire, the pieces prove too long.

### ARRANGING SET-UPS

Let us imagine that the camera, embracing in its view-field a wide area, for example two persons talking to one another, suddenly approaches one of the characters and shows some detail important to the development of the action and, at the given moment, particularly characteristic. Then the camera withdraws once more and the spectator sees the further development of the scene in long-shot as previously, both persons of the action being found again in the field of view. It must be emphasised that the spectator only derives an impression of unbroken development of the action when the transition from long-shot to close-up (and reverse) is associated with a movement common to the two pieces. For example, if as detail concerned is selected a hand drawing a revolver from a pocket during the conversation, the scene must infallibly be shot as follows: the first long-shot ends with a movement of the hand of the actor reaching for his pocket; in the following close-up, showing the hand alone, the movement begun is completed and the hand gets out the revolver; then back to the long-shot, in which the hand with the revolver, continuing the movement from the pocket begun at the end of the close-up, aims the weapon at its adversary. Such linkage by movement is the essential desideratum in that form of editing construction

in which the object taken is not removed from the view-field at a change of set-up. Now, all three pieces are shot separately (technically, more correctly, the whole of the long-shot is taken uninterruptedly, from the hand-movement to the threat to the adversary; the close-up is taken separately). It is naturally obvious that the close-up of the hand of the actor, cut into the long-shot of the hand-movement, will only be in the right place and only blend to a unity if the movements of the actor's hand at both moments of actual recording are in exact external correspondence.<sup>36</sup>

The example given of the hand is extremely elementary. The hand-movement is not complicated and exact repetition not hard to achieve. But the use of several set-ups in representing an actor's work occurs very frequently in films. The movements of the actors may be very complicated. And in order to repeat in the close-up the movements made in long-shot, to conform to the requirements of great spacial and temporal exactness, both director and actor must be technically highly practised. Yet another property of films conditions exactness of spacial directorial construction. In the preparation of the material to be shot, in the construction of the work before the camera, in the choice and fixation of one or other movement form—or, in other words, in the organisation of these tasks—not only are bounds set to the director by the considerations of his editing plan, but he is limited also by the specific view-field of the camera itself, which forces all the

material shot into the well-known rectangular tour of the cinematograph screen. During his the film director does not see what takes place in front of him with the eye of a normal spectator but looks at it with the eye of the lens.<sup>27</sup> The normal human gaze, widely embracing the area in front of him, does not exist for the director. He sees only in that conditioned section of space that the camera can take in; and yet more—space is, as it were, delimited by fast, fixed boundaries and the very definite expression of the boundaries themselves inevitably conditions the inflexibility of composition in the spacial construction. It is obvious that an actor taken with a fair close approximation of the camera will, in making a movement too wide in relation to the space he occupies, simply disappear from the view-field of the camera. If, for example, the actor sit with bended head, and must raise his head, at a given approximation of the camera, an error on his part of only an inch or two may leave only his chin visible to the spectator, the rest of him being outside the limits of the screen, or, technically, "cut off." This elementary example broadly emphasises once again the necessity of an exact spacial calculation of every movement the director shoots. Naturally this necessity applies not only to close-ups. It may be a gross mistake to take instead of the whole of somebody, only two-thirds of him. To distribute the material shot and its movements in the rectangle of the picture in such a way that everything is clearly and sharply

apprehensible, to construct every composition in such a way that the right-angled boundaries of the screen do not disturb the composition found, but perfectly contain it—that is the achievement towards which film directors strive.

#### · THE ORGANISATION OF CHANCE MATERIAL

· Anyone who knows anything of painting knows how the shape of the canvas on which the picture is painted conditions the composition of the design. The forms presented upon the canvas must be organically enclosed in the boundaries of its space. The same is true of the work of the film director. No movement, no construction is thinkable for him outside that piece of space, limited by a rectangular contour and technically termed the "picture."<sup>13</sup> It is true that not always does a film director happen to deal with subordination as direct as that of actors receiving orders easily obeyed. He often encounters happenings and processes that cannot be directly subordinated to his will. For the director strives ever to seize and use everything that the world around can offer him. And far from everything in this world obeys the shouting of a director. For instance, the shooting of a sea, a waterfall, a storm, an avalanche : all this is often brought into a film, and, forming a firmly integral part of the subject, must consequently be organised exactly as any other material prepared for editing. Here the director is completely submerged in a mass of chance happenings. Nothing is directly obedient to his will. The movements

before the camera develop in accordance with own laws. But the material required by the director—that is, out of which the film can be made—none the less be organised. If the director himself confronted with a phenomenon that is chaotic in this sense, he cannot and must not give in to it for otherwise his work will change itself to a similar unregulated record. He must employ the artificial phenomenon, and he does so by constantly inventing a series of special methods. Here comes to his help that possibility of disregarding the natural development of the action in *real* time, of which we have already spoken above. The director, alertly watching with his camera, finds it possible to pick out the material required and to unite the separate shots on the screen, even though they may in reality be separated from one another by wide temporal intervals. Suppose he require for a film a small stream, the bursting of a dam, and the flood consequent on the catastrophe, he can shoot the stream and the dam in autumn, the river when in spate in spring, and secure the required impression by combination of the two sections. Suppose the action take place on the shores of a sea with a continuous and tempestuous breaking of the surf, the director can only take his shots when the waves are high after a storm. But the shots, though spread out over several months, will represent on the screen perhaps only a day or an hour. Thus the director without the natural repetition of a chance happening for the required artistic representation.

The recording of the animals that so often appear in films affords a further instance of the use of special methods in organising the adventitious. It is said that an American director spent sixty working hours and the corresponding amount of celluloid in order to get on the screen the exact spring that he needed of a kitten on a mouse. In another film a sea-lion had to be recorded.<sup>20</sup> The timorous animal swam rapidly and irregularly around its pond. Of course, the simple method would have been to take in the whole pond, setting up the camera the required distance away, and enabling the spectator to follow the movements of the sea-lion just as a given observer standing on the bank would have followed them. The camera could not, and had not, to watch thus ; it had before it a number of separate problems. The camera had to observe how the beast glided swiftly and dexterously over the surface of the water, and it had to observe it from the best viewpoint. The sea-lion had also to be seen from closer, making close-ups necessary. The editing-plan, that preceded the taking of the shots, was as follows :

1. The sea-lion swims in the pond towards the bank—taken slightly from above, the better to follow the movements of the beast in the water.
2. The sea-lion springs out on to the bank, and then plunges back into the water.
3. It swims back to its den.

Three times had the viewpoint of the camera to be altered. Once the photographing had to be from

before the camera develop in a own laws. But the material rec—that is, out of which the film none the less be organised. himself confronted with a phenomenon in this sense, he cannot and must for otherwise his work will be an unregulated record. He must inventing a series of special shots to his help that possibility of development of the action in have already spoken above. watching with his camera, find out the material required and shots on the screen, even though be separated from one another intervals. Suppose he requires a day of a day



encounters it. *Organisation and exact arrangement*—this is the basic slogan of film work, and it is chiefly accomplished by the editing. The editing-plan can exist before the moment of shooting, and then the will of the director transforms and subdues reality in order to assemble the work out of it. The editing-plan can appear during the process of shooting, if the director, come upon unforeseen material, use it simultaneously orientating his work according to that feasible future form that will compose, from the pieces shot, a united filmic image.

So, for example, in *The Battleship "Potemkin"* the brilliant shots taken in the mist by the cameraman Tissé are cut beautifully into the film with striking effect and organically weld themselves to its whole, though nobody had foreseen the mist. Indeed, it was the more impossible to foresee the mist because mists had hitherto been regarded as a hindrance in film-work.

But, in either case, the shooting must be related organically to the editing-plan, and consequently the paramount requirement of an exact spacial and temporal calculation of the content of each piece remains in force.

#### FILMIC FORM

When, instead of making a simple fixation of some action that takes place in reality, we wish to render it in its filmic form—that is to say, exchange its actual, uninterrupted flow for an integration of creatively selected elements—then we must bear

invariably in mind those laws that relate the spectator to the director who edits the shots. When we discussed a haphazard, chaotic ordination of shots, we laid it down that this would appear as a meaningless disorder to the spectator. To impress the spectator is correctly to discover the order and rhythm of the combination.

How does one hit upon such an ordination? Certainly, generally speaking, this, like any other creative artistic process, must be left ultimately to the artist's intuition. None the less, at least the paths that approximately determine the direction of this work should be indicated. We have already made comparison above between the lens and the eye of an observer. This comparison can be carried very far. The director, as he determines the position of the camera in shooting and prescribes the length of each separate shot, can, in fact, be compared to an observer who turns his glance from one element of the action to another, so long as this observer is not apathetic in respect to his emotional state. The more deeply he is excited by the scene before him, the more rapidly and suddenly (*staccato*) his attention springs from one point to another. (The example of the motor-car accident.) The more disinterested and phlegmatically he observes the action, the calmer and slower will be the changes of his point of attention, and consequently the changes of setting of the camera. The emotion can unquestionably be communicated by the specific rhythm of the editing. Griffith, the American, richly uses this method in

the greater part of his films. Here belongs also that characteristic directorial method of forcing the spectator to insinuate himself into the skin of the actor, and letting him see with the latter's eyes. Very often after the face of the hero looking at something, the object looked at is shown from his viewpoint. The greater part of the methods of editing a film yet known to us can be linked to this regarding of the camera as observer. The considerations that determine changes of glance coincide almost exactly with those that govern correct editing construction.

But it cannot be claimed that this comparison is exhaustive. The construction of filmic form in editing can be carried out in several ways. For, finally, it is the editing itself that contains the culmination of the creative work of the film director. Indeed, it is in the direct discovery of methods for use in the editing of the material filmed that the film will gain for itself a worthy place among the other great arts. Film-art is yet in its period of birth. Such methods as approximation, comparison, pattern, and so forth, that have already been long an organic preparatory part of the existing arts, are only now being tested fumblingly in the film. I cannot here refrain from the opportunity of instancing a brilliant example of an unquestionably new editing method that Eisenstein used in *The Battleship "Potemkin."*

The fourth reel ends with the firing of a gun, on board the rebel battleship, at the Odessa Theatre. This seemingly simple incident is handled in an

extraordinarily interesting way by Eisenstein. The editing is as follows :

1. Title :

*"And the rebel battleship answered the brutality of the tyrant with a shell upon the town."*

2. A slowly and deliberately turning gun-turret is shown.

3. Title :

*"Objective the Odessa Theatre"*

4. Marble group at the top of the theatre building

5. Title

*"On the General's Headquarters."*

6. Shot from the gun

7. In two very short shots the marble figure of Cupid is shown above the gates of a building.

8. A mighty explosion, the gates totter.

9. Three short shots, a stone lion sleeping, a stone lion with open eyes, and a rampant stone lion.

10. A new explosion, shattering the gates.

This is an editing construction that is reproducible in words only with difficulty but that is also staggeringly effective on the screen. The director has here employed a daring form of editing. In his hands a stone lion rises to its feet and roars. This may have hitherto been thinkable only in literature, and its appearance on the screen is an undoubted +

thoroughly promising innovation. It is interesting to observe that in this short length of film all the characteristic elements peculiar and specific to filmic representation are united. The battleship was taken in Odessa, the various stone lions in the Crimea,<sup>40</sup> and the gates, I believe, in Moscow. The elements are picked out and welded into one united filmic space. From different, immovable stone lions has arisen in the film the non-existent movement of a filmic lion springing to its feet. Simultaneously with this movement has appeared a time non-existent in reality, inseparably bound up with each movement. The rebel battleship is concentrated to a single gun-muzzle, and the General's headquarters stare at the spectator in the shape of a single marble group on the summit of their roof. The struggle between the enemies not only loses nothing thereby, but gains in clearness and sharpness. Naturally this example of the lions instanced here cannot be brought into relation with the use of the camera as observer. It is an exceptional example, offering undoubted possibilities in the future for the creative work of the film director. Here the film passes from naturalism, which in a certain degree was proper to it, to free, symbolic representation, independent of the requirements of elementary probability.

#### THE TECHNIQUE OF DIRECTORIAL WORK

We have already laid down, as the characteristic property of filmic representation, the striving of the camera to penetrate as deeply as possible into the

details of the event being represented, to approach as nearly as possible to the object under observation, and to pick out only that which can be seen with a glance, intensified to eliminate the general and superficial. Equally characteristic is its externally exhaustive embrace of the events it handles. One might say that the film, as it were, strives to force the spectator to transcend the limits of normal human apprehension. On the one hand, it allows this apprehension to be sharpened by incredible attentiveness of observation, in concentrating entirely on the smallest details. At the same time, it allows events in Moscow and nearly related events in America to be embraced in a nearly simultaneous comprehension. Concentration on details and wide embrace of the whole include an extraordinary mass of material. Thus the director is faced with the task of organising and carefully working out a great number of separate tasks, according to a definite plan previously devised by him. As instance : in every, even in an average, film the number of persons in the action is seldom less than several dozen, and each of these persons—even those shown only shortly—is organically related to the film as a whole : the performance of each of these persons must be carefully ordered and thought out, exactly as carefully as any shot from the part of a principal. A film is only really significant when every one of its elements is firmly welded to a whole. And this will only be the case when every element of the task is carefully mastered. When one calculates that in a film of about 4,000 feet there

are about five hundred pieces, then one perceives that there are five hundred separate but interlocked groups of problems to be solved, carefully and attentively, by the director. When one considers yet again that work on a film is always and inevitably limited by a given maximal time duration, then one sees that the director is so overloaded with work that successful carrying through of the film with direction from one man alone is almost impossible. It is therefore quite easily comprehensible that all notable directors seek to have their work carried out in a departmentalised manner. The whole work of producing a film disintegrates into a series of separate and, at the same time, firmly interrelated sections. Even if one only enumerates the basic stages superficially, one gets, none the less, a very impressive list. As follows :

1. The scenario, and its contained treatment.
2. The preparation of the shooting-script, determination of the editing construction.
3. The selection of actors.
4. The building of sets and the selection of exterior.
5. The direction and taking of the separate elements into which incidents are divided for editing, the shooting-script & script-scenes.
6. Laboratory work on the material shot.
7. The editing (the cutting).

The director, as the single organising control that guides the assembling of the film from beginning to

end, must naturally make his influence felt in each of these separate sections. If a hiatus, a mishap, creep into the work of but one of the stages listed, the whole film—the result of the director's collective creation—will inevitably suffer, equally whether it be a matter of a badly chosen actor, of an uneven piece of continuity in the treatment, or of a badly developed piece of negative. Thus it is obvious that the director must be the central organiser of a group of colleagues whose efforts are directed upon the goal mapped out by him.

Collective work on a film is not just a concession to current practice, but a necessity that follows from the characteristic basic peculiarities of films. The American director is surrounded during his directorial work by a whole staff of colleagues, each of whom fulfils a sharply defined and delimited function. A series of assistants, each provided by the director with a task in which the latter's idea is clearly defined, works simultaneously on the many incidents and parts of incidents. After having been checked and confirmed by the director, these incidents are shot and added to the mass of material being prepared for the assembling of the film. The resolution of certain problems such, for instance, as the organised shooting of crowd-scenes including sometimes as many as a thousand persons—shows quite clearly that the director's work cannot attain a proper result unless he has a sufficiently extensive staff of colleagues at his disposal. In line, a director working with a thousand extras exactly resembles a



commander-in-chief. He gives battle to the indifference of the spectator ; it is his task to conquer it by means of an expressive construction of the movement of the masses he guides ; and, like a commander-in-chief, he must have a sufficient number of officers at his disposal to be able to sway the crowd according to his will. We have said already that, in order to attain a unified creation, a complete film, the director must lead constant through all the numerous stages of the work a unifying, organising line created by him. We shall now examine these stages one by one, in order to be able to represent to ourselves yet more clearly the nature of the work of film direction.

## PART II

### THE DIRECTOR AND THE SCENARIO

#### THE DIRECTOR AND THE SCENARIST

IN production, affairs usually take the following course : a scenario is received, handed over to the director, and he submits it to a so-called directorial treatment—that is to say, he works over the entire material submitted him by the scenarist according to his own individuality ; he expresses the thoughts offered him in his own filmic speech—in the language of separate images, separate elements, shots, that follow one another in a certain sequence he establishes.



scenarist, especially when he has not a clearly filmically thinking brain and is thus in some degree himself a director, provide in ready form the plastic material required by the director. Usually it is otherwise, the scenarist gives the director the idea, as such—the detached content of the image, and not its *concrete form*. But in a collaboration of this kind the welding together of the two colleagues, the scenarist and the director, is certainly of tremendous importance. It is easy to put forward ideas that will wake no echo in the director and must remain a pure abstraction without concrete form. Even the theme itself of the scenario—in other words, its basis—must inevitably be selected and established in contact with the director. The theme conditions the action, colours it, and thus, of course, inevitably colours that plastic content the expression of which is the chief substance of the director's task. Only if the theme be organically comprehended by the director will he be able to subdue it to the unifying outline of the form he is creating.

Pursuing further, we come to the action. The action outlines a number of situations for the characters, their relations to one another, and, not least, their encounters. It prescribes in its development a whole number of events that already have, in some sort, feelable form. The action cannot be thought of without already some plastically expressive form. In most cases it is difficult for a scenarist, having graduated from the literary field, to steer his course by the conditions of externally expressive



possible to require of the scenarist that he shall discover all these details and fix them in writing. The best that he can do is to find their necessary abstract formulation, and it is the affair of the director to absorb this formulation and give it the necessary plastic shape. Remarks by the scenarist such as, perhaps, "There was an insufferable smell in the room" or "Many factory-sirens vibrated and sang through the heavy, oil-permeated atmosphere" are not in any sense forbidden. They indicate correctly the relation between the ideas of the scenarist and the future plastic shaping by the director. It may already now be said with a fair degree of certainty that the most immediate task next awaiting the director is that very solution by filmic methods of the descriptive problems mentioned. The first experiments were carried out by the Americans in showing a landscape of symbolic character at the beginning of a film. *Tol'able David* began with the picture of a village taken through a cherry-tree in flower. The foaming, tempestuous sea symbolised the *leit-motif* of the film *The Remnants of a Wreck*.

A wonderful example, affording unquestionably an achievement of this kind, are the pictures of the misty dawn rising over the corpse of the murdered sailor in *The Battleship "Potemkin."* The solution of these problems—the depiction of the environment—is an undoubted and important part of the work on the scenario. And this work naturally cannot be carried out without direct participation by the director. Even a simple landscape—a piece of nature

so often encountered in films—must, by some ins guiding line, be bound up with the developin action

I repeat that the film is exceptionally economic and precise in its work. There is, and must be, i it no superfluous element. There is no such thin as a neutral background, and every factor must collected and directed upon the single aim of solvin the given problems. For every action, in so far i it takes place in the real world, is always involve in general conditions—that is, the nature of it environment.

The action of the scenes may take place by day or by night. Film directors have long been familiar with this point, and the effort to render night effects is to this day an interesting problem for film directors. One can go further. The American, Griffith, succeeded in the film *America* in obtaining, with marvellous tenderness and justness, graduations of twilight and morning. The director has a mass of material at his disposal for this kind of work. The film is interesting, as said before, not only in that it is able to concentrate on details, but also in its ability to weld to a unity numerous materials deriving from widely embraced sources.

As example, this same morning light: To gain this effect, the director can use not only the growing light of sunrise, but also numerous correctly selected, characteristic processes that infallibly relate themselves with approaching dawn in the apprehension of the spectator. The light of lamp-posts growing

paler against the lightening sky, the silhouettes of scarcely visible buildings, the tops of trees tenderly touched with the light of the not yet ascended sun, awakening birds, crowing cocks, the early morning mist, the dew—all this can be employed by the director, shot, and in editing built to a harmonious whole.

In one film an interesting method was used of representing the filmic image of a dawn. In order to embrace in the editing construction the feeling of growing and ever wider expanding light, the separate shots follow one another in such wise that at the beginning, when it is still dark, only details can be seen upon the screen. The camera took only close-ups, as if, like the eye of man in the surrounding dark, it saw only what was near to it. With the increase of the light the camera became ever more and more distant from the object shot. Simultaneously with the broadening of the light, broader and broader became the view-field embraced by the lens. From the close-ups in darkness the director changed to ever more distant long-shots, as if he sought directly to render the increasing light, pervading everything widely and more widely. It is notable that here is employed a pure technical possibility, peculiar only to the film, of communicating a very subtle feeling.

It is clear that work on the solution of problems of this kind is bound up so closely with the knowledge of film technique, so organically with the pure directorial work of analysis, selection of the material,

and its unification in creative editing, that such problems cannot, independently of the director, be resolved for him by the scenarist alone. At the same time, it is, as already mentioned, absolutely essential to give the expression of this environment in which the action of every film is immersed, and accordingly, in the creation of the scenario, it is indispensable for the director to collaborate in the work.

#### THE CHARACTERS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

I should like to note that in the work of one of the strongest directors of the present day, David Griffith, in almost every one of his films, and indeed especially in those in which he has reached the maximum expression and power, it is almost invariably the case that the action of the scenario develops among characters blended directly with that which takes place in the surrounding world.

The stormy finale of the Griffith film is so constructed as to strengthen for the spectator the conflict and the struggle of the heroes to an unimagined degree, thanks to the fact that the director introduces into the action, gale, storm, breaking ice, rivers in spate, a gigantic roaring waterfall. When Lilian Gish, in *Way Down East*, runs broken from the house, her happiness in ruins, and the faithful Barthelmess rushes after her to bring her back to life, the whole pursuit of love behind despair, developing in the furious tempo of the action, takes place in a fearful snowstorm; and at the final climax, Griffith forces the spectator himself to feel despair, when a rotating



block of ice, on it cowering the figure of a woman, approaches the precipice of a gigantic waterfall, itself conveying the impression of inescapable and hopeless ruin.

First the snowstorm, then the foaming, swirling river in thaw, packed with ice-blocks that rage yet wilder than the storm, and finally the mighty waterfall, conveying the impression of death itself. In this sequence of events is repeated, on large scale as it were, the same line of that increasing despair—despair striving to make an end, for death, that has irresistibly gripped the chief character. This harmony—the storm in the human heart and the storm in the frenzy of nature—is one of the most powerful achievements of the American genius.<sup>41</sup> This example shows particularly clearly how far-reaching and deep must be that connection, between the content of the scenario and the director's general treatment, that adds strength and unity to his work. The director not only transfers the separate scenes suggested by the scenarist each into movement and form, he has also to absorb the scenario in its entirety, from the theme to the final form of the action, and perceive and feel each scene as an irremovable, component part of the unified structure. And this can only be the case if he be organically involved in the work on the scenario from beginning to end.

When the work on the general construction has been finished, the theme moulded to a subject, the separate scenes in which the action is realised laid down, then only do we come to the period of the

Thinking about the equipment of the screen, that stage of work when, the only camera and camera girls, the director finds of the picture that will tell it and he is done. He sets out in the period of the planning out of the writing a frame up the whole of the film work of these component parts in which the separate images will later be assembled.

By firing a scenario into his action does not mean it is done to come it on the screen. Let it remember what we said regarding the creation of a film image that is more exact and effective only when the necessary let us use correctly hand. We return to the stage of making the picture of real space and real time for the future creation of film space and film time. It is only he and at the beginning of the process that the scenario guides the work and that the director has only to pay attention as he goes to represent it, to realize and seek not only to keep contact with it at every given moment, but to be constantly related to it—now comes a change. The guide of the work is now the director, equipped with that knowledge of technique and that special talent that enables him to find the correct and vivid images expressing the quintessential element of each given idea. The director organizes each separate incident, analyzing it, disintegrating it into elements, and simultaneously thinking of the connection of these elements in editing. It is here of special interest to note that the scenarioist (this later stage, just as the director in the early stage must not be diverted from the work. His task it is

to supervise the resolution to editable shape of every separate problem, thinking at every instant of the basic theme—sometimes completely abstract, yet current in every separate problem.

Only by means of a close collaboration can a correct and valuable result be attained. Naturally one might postulate as the ideal arrangement the incarnation of scenarist and director in one person. But I have already spoken of the unusual scope and complexity of film creation, that prevents any possibility of its mastery by one person. Collectivism is indispensable in the film, but the collaborators must be blended with one another to an exceptionally close degree.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RHYTHM OF THE FILM

The editing treatment of the scenario consists not only in the determination of the separate incidents, scenes, objects that are to be shot, but also in the arrangement of the sequence in which they are to be shown. I have already said that in the determination of this sequence one must not only have in mind the plastic content, but also the length of each separate piece of celluloid—that is to say, the rhythm with which the pieces are to be joined must be considered. This rhythm is the means of emotionally influencing the spectator. By this rhythm the director is equally in the position to excite or to calm the spectator. An error of rhythm can reduce the impression of the whole scene shown to zero, but equally can rhythm, fortunately found, raise the



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decisive for the final form that the film projected on the screen will take, is the last stage of the work of the director on the scenario. Now is the moment come at which new members of the collective team enter the work of creating the film—in fact, those who are concerned with real men and objects, with the movements and backgrounds in which they are locked. The director now has to prepare the material in order to record it on the film

### PART III

## THE DIRECTOR AND THE ACTOR

### TWO KINDS OF PRODUCTION

In accordance with their acting, films can roughly be divided into two kinds. In the first group are included such productions as are based on one particular actor—the "star," as he is called in America. The scenario is written especially for the actor. The entire work of the director resolves itself to the presentation to the spectator, once again in new surroundings and with a new supporting cast, of some well-known and favourite figure. Thus are produced the films of Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford, and Lloyd. To the second group belong those films that are underlain by some definite idea or thought. These scenarios are not written for an actor, but actors must be found for their realisation when written. This works David Griffith. It is not,

## PUDOVKIN

impression of a scene to an infinite degree, may contain in its separate, imagined, visual nothing especial. The rhythmic treatment of film-scenario is not limited to the treatment of separate incidents, to the finding of the separate incidents comprising them. One must remember images divided into separate shots, that the film is divided into separate incidents, the incidents joined together to form reels, and the reels together to form the whole film. Wherever there is division of the action—there everywhere the rhythmic element must be considered, not indeed because "rhythm" is a modern catchword, but because rhythm, guided by the will of the director, can and must be a powerful and secure instrument of effect. Remember, for instance, how exhausting, and how extinguishing in its effect, was the badly created, constantly confused rhythm of that big film, *The Ray of Death*; and, on the other hand, how clever was the distribution of material in *Tolable David*, in which the alternation of quiet and tense sections kept the spectator fresh and enabled him to appreciate the violent finale. The editable preparation of the scenario—in which not only the exact plastic content of each separate little piece is taken into consideration, but also the position in rhythmic sequence, the length when the pieces are joined to incidents, the incidents to sequences and so forth—the establishment of this position, which is already completely



decisive for the final form that the film projected on the screen will take, is the last stage of the work of the director on the scenario. Now is the moment come at which new members of the collective team enter the work of creating the film—in fact, those who are concerned with real men and objects, with the movements and backgrounds in which they are locked. The director now has to prepare the material in order to record it on the film

### PART III

## THE DIRECTOR AND THE ACTOR

### TWO KINDS OF PRODUCTION

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## PUDOVKIN

therefore, remarkable that in several of his pictures Griffith rejects such brilliant names as Pickford, Mae Marsh, and others, a whole series of heroes and heroines whom, having used them for one or two films, he gives up to other hands. To that extent to which a film is basically inspired by some thought, by some definite idea and not merely by the display of clever technique or a pretty face—the relationship between the actor and the material of the film receives a special and specific character, proper only to the film.

## THE FILM ACTOR AND THE FILM TYPE

In order to create a required appearance, the stage actor tries to find and create the necessary make-up, altering his face. If he has to take the part of a strong man in the play, he binds muscles of wadding on his arms. Suppose, for example, it were proposed to him to play Samson, he would not be ashamed of erecting pasteboard pillars on the set, to overthrow them later with one push of his shoulder. Such deceit in properties, equally with make-up drawn upon the face, is unthinkable in films. Make-up, property human being in a real environment, among real trees, near real stones and real water, under a real sky, is as incongruous and unacceptable as a living horse on a stage filled with pasteboard.<sup>43</sup> The conditionality of the film is not a property conditionality: it changes not matter, but time and space. For this reason one cannot make up a required type artificially for the screen.

one must discover him. That is why even in those productions the pivot of which is the inevitable and necessary "star," none the less the supporting actors for the second and third parts are always sought by the director from among many. The work of finding the necessary actors, the selection of persons with vividly expressive externalities conforming to the requirements made by the scenario is one of the hardest tasks of the director. It must be remembered that, as I have already said, one cannot "play a part" on the film; one must possess a sum of real qualities, externally clearly expressed, in order to attain a given effect on the spectator. It is therefore easy to understand why, in film production, a man, passing by chance on the street, who has never had any idea of being an actor, is often brought in, only because he happens to be a vividly externally expressive type, and, moreover, the one desired by the director. In order to make concretely clear this inevitable necessity to use, as acting material, persons possessing in reality the properties of the image required, I shall instance at random the following example.

Let us suppose that we require for a production an old man. In the Theatre the problem would be perfectly simple. A comparatively young actor could paint wrinkles on his face, and so make on the spectator, from the stage, the external impression of an old man. In the film this is unthinkable. Why? Just because a real, living wrinkle is a deepening, a groove in the face. And when an old man with a



## ON FILM TECHNIQUE

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real wrinkle turns his head, light plays on the wrinkle. A real wrinkle is not only a dark stripe, it is a shadow from the groove, and a different position of the face in relation to light will always give a different pattern of light and shade. The living wrinkle lives by means of movement in light. But if we paint a black stripe on a smooth skin, then on the screen the face in movement will never show the living groove played on by the light, but only a stripe painted in black paint. It will be especially incongruous in cases of close approximation of the lens—that is, in close-ups.

In the Theatre, make-up of this kind is possible because the light on the stage is conditionally constant and throws no shadows.

By this example it may in some wise be judged to what degree the actor we seek must resemble his prescribed appearance in the scenario. It may be said, in fine, that in most cases the film actor plays himself, and the work of the director consists not in compelling him to create something that is not in him, but in showing, as expressively and vividly as possible, what is in him, by using his real characteristics.

#### PLANNING THE ACTING OF THE FILM-TYPE

Where the acting material is assembled in this way, the possibility of using a stock company, as in the Theatre, is naturally almost excluded.<sup>14</sup> In almost every film the director is compelled to work with ever new human material, often entirely untrained. But at the same time the work of the person being

photographed must be strictly subjected to a whole series of conditions dictated by the film. I have already said that each piece shot must be exactly organised in space and time. The work of the actor being shot, as much as everything being shot, must be exactly considered. Remember that we have discussed the process of taking editable shots, whereby the same movements have to be repeated several times with great exactitude, in order to make it possible for the director to form into a single whole the incidents later composed by the junction of separate pieces. In order to work exactly one must know how, one must learn how, or at least be able to remember by heart. For the work of the film actor, or, if you prefer it, his acting, is deprived of that unbroken quality proper to the work of his colleague on the stage. The film image of the actor is composed from dozens and hundreds of separate, disintegrated pieces in such a way that sometimes he works at the beginning on something that will later form a part of the end. The film actor is deprived of a consciousness of the uninterrupted development of the action, in his work. The organic connection between the consecutive parts of his work, as result of which the distinct whole image is created, is not for him. The whole image of the actor is only to be conceived as a future appearance on the screen, subsequent to the editing of the director; that which the actor performs in front of the lens in each given piece is only raw material, and it is necessary to be endowed with

special, specific, filmic powers in order to imagine to oneself the whole edited image, meticulously composed of separate pieces picked sometimes from the beginning, sometimes from the middle. It is therefore understandable why it was first in film that there appeared exact directorial construction of the actor's work.<sup>45</sup> In most cases only the director knows the shooting-script so thoroughly and so well as to be able clearly to imagine it to himself in that shape in which it will later be transposed upon the screen, and therefore only he can imagine to himself each given part, each given image in its editing construction. If an actor, even a very talented one, allow himself to be inspired by a given separate scene, he will never be able, of himself, so to limit his work as to be able to give a part of his acting of exactly that length and that content later required by the editing. This will only be possible when the actor has entered as deeply and organically into the work of building the film creation as the director producing it. There are schools that maintain that the play of the actor must be ordered by the director down to its least details ; down to the finest movements of the fingers, of the eyebrows, of the eyelashes, everything must be exactly calculated by the director, instructed by him, and recorded on the film. This school represents an undoubted exaggeration that results in unnecessary mechanicalisation ; it is, none the less, not to be gainsaid that the free performance of the actor must be enclosed in a



frame-work of the severest directorial control. It is interesting that even such a director as Griffith—who is distinguished by a special “psychologicality” that should, strictly speaking, preclude the possibility of hard and fast construction—none the less does undoubtedly plastically “create” his actor. Griffith has a peculiar feminine type of his own, pathetically helpless and heroic at the same time. It is interesting to follow how, in various of his films, various women express the same emotional states by the same external means. Remember how Mae Marsh weeps in the trial in *Intolerance*, how the heroine in *America* sobs over her dying brother, and how Lillian Gish sobs in the *Orphans of the Storm* as she tells of her sister. There is the same heart-rending face, the same streaming tears, and the helpless, trembling attempt to show a smile behind tears. The similarity of method of many American actors who have worked under control of one and the same director shows markedly how far-reaching is the directorial construction of the actor’s work.

#### THE “ENSEMBLE”

In the Theatre there exists a concept “ensemble,” the concept implying that general composition which embraces the work of all the actors collaborating in the play. The *ensemble* undoubtedly exists also in the film, and the same may be said about it as has been said about the edited image of the actor. The fact is that the film actor is deprived of the possibility of himself directly appreciating this *ensemble*. Very

often an actor, from beginning to end of his part in front of the camera, does not once see the performance of the actor opposite him in the film, and is shot separately. None the less, however, when the film is subsequently joined, the scenes of this actor will appear directly connected with those of the other, whom he has never seen. The consciousness of the *ensemble*, the relationship between the work of the separate characters, consequently becomes once again a task of the director. Only he, imagining to himself the film in its edited form, already projected upon the screen, already joined from its separately shot pieces—only he can appreciate this *ensemble*, and direct and construct the actor's work in conformity with its requirements. The question of the bounds of the influence the director should exert on the work of the actors is a question that is still open. Exact mechanical obedience to a plan provided by the director has undoubtedly no future. But also a wavering free improvisation by the actor according to general suggestions from the director—a method hitherto a characteristic of most Soviet directors—is definitely inadmissible. Only one thing is still undoubted, that the whole image of the actor will only result when the separately shot pictures are united one to the other in editing, and the work of the actor in each separate shot has been firmly and organically linked to the clear understanding of the picture whole. If such an understanding is present, no actor he can work freely, but, if not, then only form.

the exact instructions of the director, the future creator of the editing, can correctly construct the acting work.

Special difficulties are encountered by the director with casually collected human material, but this casual material is, as we have said, nearly inevitable in every film ; and, on the other hand, this material is of exceptional interest. An average film lasts an hour and a half. In this hour and a half there pass before the spectator sometimes dozens of faces that he may remember, surrounding the heroes of the film, and these faces must be especially carefully selected and shown. Often the entire expression and value of an incident, though it may centre round the hero, depends from these characters of second rank who surround him. These characters may be shown to the spectator for no more than six or seven seconds. Therefore they must impress him clearly and vividly. Remember the example of the gang of blackguards in *Tellable David*, or of the two old men in *The Isle of Lost Ships*. Each face impresses as firmly and vividly as would a separate, clever characterisation by a talented writer. To find a person such that the spectator, after seeing him for six seconds, shall say of him, " That man is a rogue, or good-natured, or a fool "—this is the task that presents itself to the director in the selection of his human material.

#### EXPRESSIVE MOVEMENT

When the persons are selected, when the director begins to shoot their work, they provide him with a

new problem: the actor must move in front of the camera, and his movements must be expressive. The concept "an expressive movement" is not so simple as it appears at first sight. First of all, it is not identical with that everyday movement, that customary behaviour proper to an average man in his real surroundings. A man not only has gestures, but words also are at his disposal. Sometimes the word accompanies the gesture and sometimes, reversed, the gesture aids the word. In the Theatre both are feasible. That is why an actor with deeply ingrained theatrical training conforms with difficulty to the standards of the screen. In *The Postmaster*, Moskvín—an actor of undoubted exceptionally big filmic possibilities—none the less tires one unpleasantly with his ever-moving mouth and with petty movements beating time to the rhythm of the unspoken words. Gesture-movement accompanying speech is unthinkable on the film. Losing its correspondence with the sounds that the spectator does not hear, it degenerates to a senseless plastic muttering. The director in work with an actor must so construct the performance of the latter that the significant point shall lie always in the movement, and the word accompany it only when required. In a pathetic scene, when he learns from the godmother that the hussar officer has eloped with Dunia, Moskvín speaks a great deal and obviously, while at the same time, automatically and quite naturally, like a man accustomed to spoken business, he accompanies every word with

one and the same repeated movement of the hand. During the shooting, when the words were audible, the scene was effective, and even very effective; but on the screen it resulted as a painful and often ridiculous shuffling about on one spot. The idea that the film actor should express in gesture that which the ordinary man says in words is basically false. In creating the picture the director and actor use only those moments when the word is superfluous, when the substance of the action develops in silence, when the word may accompany the gesture, but does not give birth to it.<sup>46</sup>

#### EXPRESSIVE OBJECTS

That is why the inanimate *object* has such enormous importance on the films. An object is already an expressive thing in itself, in so far as the spectator always associates with it a number of images. A revolver is a silent threat, a flying racing-car is a pledge of rescue or of help arriving in time. The performance of an actor linked with an object and built upon it will always be one of the most powerful methods of filmic construction. It is, as it were, a filmic monologue without words. An object, linked to an actor, can bring shades of his state of emotion to external expression so subtly and deeply as no gesture or mimicry could ever express them conditionally. In *The Battleship "Potemkin"* the battleship itself is an image so powerfully and clearly shown that the men on board are resolved into it, organically blended *with* it.

The shooting down of the crowd is answered not by the sailors standing to the guns, but by the steel battleship itself, breathing from a hundred mouths. When, at the finale, the battleship rushes under full steam to meet the fleet, then, in some sort, the steadfastly labouring, steel driving-rods of the engine incarnate in themselves the hearts of its crew, furiously beating in tenseness of expectation.

#### THE DIRECTOR AS CREATOR OF THE "ENSEMBLE"

For the film director the concept of *ensemble* is extraordinarily wide. Material objects enter organically into it as well as characters, and it is necessary once more to recall that, in the final editing of the picture, the performance of the actor will stand next to, will have to be welded to, a whole series of other pieces, which he cannot see, and of which he can know only indirectly. Only the director knows and gauges them completely. Therefore the actor is considered by the director, before anything else, as material requiring his "treatment." Let us, in fine, also remember that even each actor separately who is, in real conditions, apprehended as something whole, as the figure of a human being whose movements are perceived as the simultaneous connected work of all the members of his body—such a man often does not exist on the screen. In editing, the director builds sometimes not only scenes, but also a separate human being. Let us remember how often in films we see and remember a character

despite the fact that we saw only his head and, separately, his hand.

In his experimental films Lev Kuleshov tried to record a woman in movement by photographing the hands, feet, eyes, and head of different women. As consequence of editing resulted the impression of the movements of *one* single person. Naturally this example does not suggest a special means of practical creation of a man not available in reality, but it emphasises especially vividly the statement that, even in the limits of his short individual work unconnected with other actors, the image of the actor derives not from a separate stage of work, the shooting of a separate piece, but only from that editing construction that welds such pieces to a filmic whole. Take this as one more confirmation of the absolute necessity for exactness in working, and one more confirmation of the axiomatic supremacy of its imagined edited image over each separate element of the actual work in front of the lens. Also, quite obviously of course, the axiomatic supremacy of the director, bearer of the image of the general construction of the film, over the actor who provides material for this construction.

## PART IV

## THE ACTOR IN THE FRAME

## THE ACTOR AND THE FILMIC IMAGE

I HAVE already spoken above of the necessity constantly to bear in mind the rectangular space of the screen that always encloses every movement shot. The movement of the actor in real three-dimensional space once again serves the director only as material for the selection of the elements required for construction of the future appearance, flat and inserted exactly into the space of the frame. The director never sees the actor as a real human being; he imagines and sees the future filmic appearance, and carefully selects the material for it by making the actor move in various ways and altering the position of the camera relative to him. The same disintegration as with everything in film. Not for one moment is the director presented with live men. Before him he has always only a series of component parts of the future filmic construction. This does not necessitate a sort of killing and mechanicalisation of the actor. He can be as spontaneous as he likes, and need not in any way disturb the natural continuity of his movements, but the director, controlling the camera, will, owing to the nature of cinematographic representation, himself pick out from the entire work of the living man the pieces he requires. When Griffith shot



the hands of Mae Marsh in the trial scene, the actress was probably crying when she pinched the skin of her hands; she lived a full and real experience and was completely in the grip of the necessary emotion as a whole, but the director, for the film, picked out only her hands.

#### THE ACTOR AND LIGHT


There is one more element characteristic for the work of the director with the actor—that is light, that light without which neither object nor human being nor anything else has existence on the film. The director, determining the lighting in the studio, literally creates the future form upon the screen. For light is the only element that has effect on the sensitive strips of celluloid, only of light of varying strengths is woven the image we behold upon the screen. And this light serves not only to develop the forms—to make them visible. An actor unlit is—nothing. An actor lit only so as to be visible is a simple, undifferentiated, indefinite object. This same light can be altered and constructed in such a way as to make it enter as an organic component into the actor's work. The composition of the light can eliminate much, emphasise much, and bring out with such strength the expressive work of the actor, that it becomes apparent that light is not simply a condition for the fixation of expressive work by the actor, but in itself represents a part of this expressive work. Remember the face of the priest in *The Battleship "Potemkin"* lit from underneath.<sup>47</sup>

Thus the work of the film actor in creation of his filmic image is bounded by a technically complex frame of conditions specifically proper to the film. The exact awareness of these conditions lies only with the director, and the actor can only enter creatively, sufficiently widely and deeply, into the work of creating the film when he is a sufficiently tightly and organically welded member of the team—that is, if his work be sufficiently deeply embraced in the sphere of the preparatory work of the director and scenarist. Thus we have arrived, at the end of this chapter, once more at a conclusion of the necessity for an organic team.

## PART V

### THE DIRECTOR AND THE CAMERAMAN

#### THE CAMERAMAN AND THE CAMERA

WHEN the actors have been chosen, and the scenes exactly and editably prepared—then begins the shooting. Into the work enters a new member of the team—a man armed with a camera, who does the actual shooting—the cameraman. And now the director has a new problem to overcome: between the collected and prepared material and the future finished work stands the camera, and the man working it. Everything that has been said about the composition of movement  of the picture, about light bringing out

the picture, about expressive light, must in actuality be brought into conformity with the technical possibilities of shooting. The camera, which appears for the first time in shooting, introduces a real conditionality into film-work. First and foremost: the angle of its vision. Normal human vision can embrace a little less than 180 degrees of surrounding space—that is to say, man can perceive almost the half of his horizon. The field of the lens is considerably less. Its view-angle is equal roughly to 45 degrees and, here already the director begins to leave behind the normal apprehension of real space. Already, owing to this peculiarity, the guided lens of the camera does not embrace the entirety of optical space, but picks out from it only a part, an element, the so-called picture. With the help of a number of camera accessories a yet greater narrowing of this view-field can be attained; the frame itself surrounding the image can be altered, by means of a so-called "mask."

Not only does the small view-angle set bounds to the space in which the action develops both in height and in width, but by a technical property of the lens the depth of the space picked out is also limited. An actor shot from very close has not only to fit his movements into the narrow frame of the picture in order not to overstep its bounds, he must remember also that he must not recede in depth or approach, for he would then go out of focus and his image would be unclear. At the same time, the camera, over and above those limitations that

condition the movements of the material shot, has also a number of accessories which, far from limiting, on the contrary broaden, the work of the director. Remember, for example, in the pictures of Griffith, those lyrically tender moments that appear as if taken through a slight haze. Here we have a method that unquestionably strengthens the impressions of the scene shot, and it is carried out solely by the cameraman taking his shot through a light, transparent gauze or with a specially constructed lens.<sup>46</sup>

Remember the extraordinarily impressive shot in *The Battleship "Potemkin,"* when the stone steps appear suddenly to rush up to meet the falling wounded. This effect could not have been attained without a special apparatus that enabled the camera to be tilted quickly from up downwards during the shot.

In the hands of the cameraman are those actual technical possibilities with the help of which he can transform the abstract ideas of the director to concrete. And these possibilities are innumerable.

#### THE CAMERA AND ITS VIEWPOINT

When the camera stands ready in position, the director does not now only orientate himself on the future screen image, as he did when working on the scenario or selecting and preparing the actor. He does not now only imagine or visualize it. Looking through the view-finder (a special appliance attached to the camera), the director sees on smaller

scale the future picture that will later be projected on the screen. The scenario has been written, its special tasks exactly formulated. The prescription of the shooting of each scene, determining its plastic and rhythmic content, is ready, the cast is selected and ready for work, all preparation completed, and now the material thus prepared has to be fixed upon the celluloid. The camera when prepared for shooting embodies the viewpoint from which the future spectator will apprehend the appearance on the screen. This viewpoint may be various. Each object can be seen, and therefore shot, from a thousand different points, and the selection of any given point cannot, and must not, be by chance. This selection is always related to the entire content of the task that the director keeps in mind in aiming, in one way or another, to affect the spectator.

Let us begin, for argument's sake, with the simple showing of a shape. Suppose we wish to shoot a cigarette lying on the edge of a table. One can so set up the camera that the opening of the cardboard cartouche of the cigarette exactly faces the lens; and as a result of the shot no cigarette will appear upon the screen—the spectator will see only the stripe of the edge of the table, and on it a small round black circle, the opening of the cartouche circled by its round white frame of cardboard. It follows that in order to enable the spectator to see the cigarette, it is necessary for the lens of the camera also to be able to "see" it. It is necessary, in shooting, to find such a position for the lens in

relation to the object as will enable the whole shape of the latter to be seen with maximum clarity and sharpness.

If a torn cigarette is to be shot, the cameraman must so position the camera that the lens, and with it the eye of the future spectator, shall clearly see not only the tear of the paper, and the tobacco sticking through it.

The example with the cigarette is very elementary—it but roughly proves the substantial importance of the selection of a definite set-up of the camera in relation to the object shot. The problems solved by this selection, in actual practice, are many-sided and provide one of the most important aspects of the joint work of director and cameraman.

—Let us turn to the more complex. The task of the director may involve not only a simple representation of the shape of the given object, but of its relative position in this or that part of space. Let us suppose we have not only to shoot a wall-clock but also to show that it hangs very high. Here the task of selecting the picture is complicated by a new requirement, and the cameraman, in choosing the set-up for the camera, either goes to a good distance, trying to get a part of the floor in the picture and thus show the height, or he shoots the clock from near but from below, bringing out its position by a sharp fore-shortening in perspective. If we take into consideration the fact that the material employed by the film director may be exceptionally complex in its form, it becomes clear how enormous a part is played by the selection of the camera-set-up.

To shoot a railway-engine well implies to be able to select that viewpoint from which its complicated form will be most exhaustively and vividly apparent. A correctly discovered set-up determines the expressiveness of the future image.

Everything said so far has related especially to the shooting of motionless objects that do not change their position in relation to the camera.

#### THE SHOOTING OF MOVEMENT

The work becomes yet more complicated when movement is introduced. An object not only has shape, this shape in the image alters itself functionally with its movement, and, moreover, its movement itself has a shape and serves as object of shooting.

The previous desideratum remains in force. The camera must be so directed that every happening in front of it shall be visible in its clearest and most distinct form. Why does a shot of an army parade taken from above produce so vivid an impression? Because it is just from above that, with the fullest sharpness and clearness, the energetic, rhythmic movement of troops can best be observed. Why is the impression of a rushing train or a racing car so effective when the object is shot so that, having appeared in the distance, it charges straight at the camera, and dashes past near it? Because it is in the perspective increase of the approaching machine that the speed of the movement is most distinctly represented. If we are to shoot a car and

a chauffeur sleeping in it, the cameraman will place the camera on the ground near the car. But if we are to shoot the same car winding through the traffic of the street, the cameraman will shoot the scene from the third floor in order the better to pick out the movement in its form and essence. The selection of the camera set-up can intensify the expression of the image shot in many directions. The shooting of a railway-engine charging straight at the lens communicates to an exceptional degree the power of the gigantic machine.

In *The Battleship "Potemkin"* the muzzles of the guns, looking straight at the spectator, are exceptionally threatening. In *The Virgin of Stamboul* the galloping horses are shot by the cameraman from a road-ditch looking up, so that the hoofs dash by soaring, as it were, over the heads of the spectator and the impression of a mad gallop is increased to maximum. Here the work of the cameraman ceases to be a simple fixation of an incident independent of the director working on it. The quality of the future film depends not only on what is to be shot but also on how it is to be shot. This how must be planned by the director and carried out by the cameraman.

#### THE CAMERA COMPELS THE SPECTATOR TO SEE AS THE DIRECTOR WISHES

By selection of the camera set-up, director and cameraman lead the spectator after them. The viewpoint of the camera is scarcely ever the exa-



viewpoint of an ordinary spectator. The power of the film director lies in the fact that he can force the spectator to see an object *not* as it is easiest to see it. The camera, changing its position, as it were, "behaves" in a given mode and manner. It is, as it were, charged with a conditioned relation to the object shot: now, urged by heightened interest, it delves into details; now it contemplates the general whole of the picture. Often it places itself in the position of the hero and records what he sees; sometimes it even "feels" with the hero. Thus, in *The Leather Pushers*, the camera sees with the eyes of a beaten boxer rendered dizzy by a blow, and shows the revolving, swimming picture of the amphitheatre.

The camera can "feel" also with the spectator. Here we encounter a very interesting method of film-work. It can be said with completest safety that man apprehends the world around him in varying ways, depending on his emotional condition. A number of attempts on the part of the film director has been directed towards the creation, by means of special methods of shooting, of a given emotional condition in the spectator, and thus the strengthening of the impression of the scene. Griffith was the first to shoot tragic situations as if through a light mist, explaining it by his desire to force the spectator to see, as it were, through tears.

In the film *Strike* there is an interesting sequence: workers out for a walk outside the town. In front of the strollers is an accordion-player. After the close-up in which the accordion is seen opening and

which they follow a series of pieces in which the melodies are shot from various, often very distant viewpoints. But the playing accordion remains held through all the shots, become barely visible transparent. The landscapes and the groups walking about are visible through it. Here has been solved a peculiar problem. The director was in representing the picture of the stroll, laying it in the wide background of the landscape, to produce simultaneously the characteristic rhythm of mechanical wounding from far away. In this he succeeded. He succeeded thanks to the fact that the cameraman was able to find a concrete method for the realization of the director's idea. To take this scene the accordion had to be swathed in black velvet, and it was necessary to calculate exactly the relative exposures of the shot with the landscape and of the separate shot of the accordion. A number of calculations had to be made, requiring special knowledge of the craft of the cameraman and a technical inventive faculty. Here a complete blending of the work of director and cameraman was indispensable, and it conditioned the success of the achievement. The ideas of the director, in his work in making expressive the film image, only receive concrete embodiment when technical knowledge and the creative inventive faculty of the cameraman go hand in hand, or, in other words, when the cameraman is an organic member of the team and takes part in the creation of the film from beginning to end.

## THE SHAPING OF THE COMPOSITION

The selection of the camera set-up is but a special case of the work of selecting location. In working on location (and, on the average, fifty per cent of every production is made on location)<sup>42</sup> the first task of the cameraman and director is to select that part of space in which the scene is to develop. Such selection—like everything in film work—must not be by chance. Nature in the picture must never serve as background to the scene being taken, but must enter organically into its whole and become a part of its content. Every background *qua* background runs counter to the basic laws of films. If the director require in a scene only the actor and his performance, then every background, with the exception of a flat surface inconspicuous to the attention, will steal a part of the spectator's attention, and thus substantially nullify the basic method of film effect.<sup>43</sup> If something be brought into the picture besides the actor this something must be linked to the general purpose of the scene. When, in *Way down East*, Griffith shows the lad Barthelmess knee-deep in thick grass, surrounded by trembling white daisies, bowing in the wind, in this picture nature does not serve as a chance background; it is true that it is done in a rather sentimental way, but it vividly supplements and strengthens the image shown. The work on the formation of the "essence" of the picture, the necessity for an organic dependence between the developing action



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and the surrounding, is so indispensable and important, that the finding and determination of the locations desired for exterior shots is one of the most complex stages in the preparatory work of the cameraman and director.

One of the first requirements set in the production work of the film director is exactitude. If, having thought out the filmic image of a scene, in taking it he desire to get that material out of which he can create what he has planned, he must inevitably think of each piece he is taking as an element of the future editing construction; and the more exact is his work on the components of each element being taken, the more perfectly and clearly he will reach the possibility of realising his thought. From this derives the peculiar relation of the film director to the actor, to the objects, to all the real matter with which he works in the course of his production. Each separate piece of celluloid used by the director in taking a required shot must be used in such a way that its length shall exactly conform to the requirements of that general task which forms the basis of the filmic treatment of any given scene. In every given piece a movement begins and proceeds to an exact required point, and the time required for this movement must be exactly determined by the director. If the movement be accelerated or slowed down, the piece obtained will either over- or under-step the necessary length. Such an element of an incident, in departing from the length prescribed for it, will, in the process of

editing, destroy the harmony of the filmic image planned. Everything chance, unorganised, everything unsubdued to the editing construction planned by the director in representing to himself the filmic image of each given incident—all this will lead inevitably to lack of clarity, to confusion in the final editing formation of the incident. An incident will awaken an impression from the screen only if it be well edited. Good editing will be achieved when for it is found the correct rhythm, and this rhythm is dependent on the relative lengths of the pieces, while the lengths of the pieces are in organic dependence on the content of each separate one. Therefore the director must enclose every shot he takes into a harsh, severely limited, temporal frame.

Let us, for example, suppose that we are editably taking an incident with an actor. The incident is as follows: The actor sits in an armchair tensely awaiting his possible arrest. He hears that some one has approached the door; he watches intensely, sees the handle of the door beginning to move. The actor slowly takes out his revolver that he had hidden between the back and the seat of the chair; the door begins to open. He quickly aims the revolver, but, there enters unexpectedly, instead of the policemen, a boy carrying some puppies (from the film *Beyond the Law*).

The editing is written as follows:

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The editing is written as follows:

1. The actor sitting in the armchair alters his position, as if he had heard a knock.

2. His tense, watching face.
3. Taken by itself : the moving door-handle.
4. Close-up—the hand of the actor, slowly and fumblingly drawing the revolver.
5. The slightly opening door.
6. The actor aims the revolver.
7. Through the door steps the boy with the puppies.

The elements of the incident, by means of which the attention of the spectator is turned now to the man, now to the door, now concentrates upon the moving handle, now upon the hand of the actor or the revolver, must, finally, blend upon the screen to the single image of an unbrokenly developing incident. Undoubtedly the director must, for the creation of a sharp break between the slowly increasing tension and the unexpectedly rapid *dénouement*, establish a definite, creatively discovered rhythm of editing. Every element of the incident has to be taken separately. And everything that the actor performs in the shooting of each piece must be exactly temporally limited. But it is not sufficient to set temporal boundaries ; within these boundaries the actor must carry out the given series of movements, must saturate every piece with the given clear and expressive plastic content. If room for chance were left in the actor's work, then not only a pause, a slowing down, but a superfluous movement on the part of the actor would already shatter those temporal limits that must infallibly be

set by the director. This shattering, as we have already said, would alter the length of the piece, and thereby destroy the effect of the whole construction of the incident. We thus perceive that not only must temporal boundaries be exactly established, but also the movement form they enclose; the plastic content of the acting work in each separate scene must be performed exactly, if the director wish to attain a definite result in the creation of that filmic image of the scene that is to effect an impression on the spectator from the screen, not now in its real, but in its filmic form. The exactitude of work in space and in time is an indispensable condition, by fulfilment of which the film technician can attain a clearly and vividly impressive filmic representation.

The same striving for exactitude must govern the director and cameraman not only in scene-construction, but also in selection of the parts of location from which the space on the screen is to be constructed. It may appear to suffice that if a river or a wood be required for a shot, a "pretty" river or wood be found and then the shooting begun. In reality, however, the director never seeks a river or a wood, he seeks the required "pictures." These required pictures, corresponding exactly to the problems of each scene, may be strewn over dozens of different rivers; they will, however, be blended to a whole in the film. The director does not shoot nature; he uses it for his future composition in editing. The problem set by this composition may

strict to such a degree that director and camera-  
 often forcibly alter and reconstruct a part of  
 are in trying to obtain the form required. The  
 taking away of interfering boughs, the felling of  
 perfluous tree, its transplantation whithersoever  
 be necessary, the damming of a river, the filling  
 with blocks of ice—all this is characteristic for  
 film technician, always and by all means making  
 of natural material for the construction of the  
 image required. The employment of nature  
 material reaches its extremest expression in the  
 construction of natural scenes in the studio, when  
 in real earth, real stones, sand, live trees, and  
 water, are exactly created in the studio just those  
 things required by the director.

The selection of the shooting location and the  
 determination of the camera set-up, as a whole  
 technically termed "selection of the picture," are  
 always complicated by yet another condition. This  
 addition is light. We have already spoken of the  
 powerful influence of light. Light it is that finally  
 creates that form which is transferred to the screen.  
 Only when the object is lit in the required manner  
 and to the required intensity is it ready for shooting.  
 The appearance on the celluloid projected upon  
 the screen is only a combination of light and dark  
 spots. On the screen there is nothing but light,  
 and it is quite obvious, therefore, that in controlling  
 the light at the taking we are actually performing  
 the work of making the future image. Feeling for  
 the quality and intensity of light is inseparably

bound up with the knowledge of that relation between the object and its later appearance upon the celluloid which belongs exclusively to the technique of the cameraman.

#### THE LABORATORY

Everything that has been said already about the necessity for the close relation of all those collaborating in the production of the film relates also in full to the cameraman. Through the director, the work of whom on the various processes and happenings of reality he transforms to filmic material, the cameraman is bound to the other members of the team, the actor and the scenarist. He, in his turn, serves as the connecting link between the director and the technicians of the laboratory, the work of which is the next stage of working out the film material, directly following the shooting.

Only after the development of the negative and the printing of the positive does the director at last receive in pure form the film material from which he can assemble his work. Just as every other stage of film production, the work of the laboratory also involves more than the simple execution to pattern of standardised processes (chemical treatments of the exposed film). Its tasks are very often the continuation of the ideas originated by the scenarist and pursued by the director and cameraman. The Griffithian twilight in *America* could not have been obtained without a developer of the necessary synthetic properties and power. Only now, when before

us appear all the pieces necessary for the creation of the film, at last in the shape of images printed on positive stock, only now ends the organic liaison between all the workers on the film production, that liaison which is an indispensable condition of the creation of a "real," significant, finished work.

The director now begins to join his detached pieces to a whole. We now leave him engaged on that basic creative process of which we spoke at the beginning of this essay.<sup>51</sup>

#### COLLECTIVISM : THE BASIS OF FILM-WORK

This essay on the film director has covered all the collaborators in the production of a film. It could not have been otherwise. The work of film-making has all the properties of an industrial undertaking. The technical manager can achieve nothing without foremen and workmen, and their collective effort will lead to no good result if every collaborator limit himself only to a mechanical performance of his narrow function. Team-work is that which makes every, even the most insignificant, task a part of the living work and organically connects it to the general task. It is a property of film-work that the smaller the number of persons directly taking part in it, the more disjointed is their activity and the worse is the finished product of their work—that is, the film.

(First published as Number Five of a series of popular scientific books by Kinopetchat, Moscow and Leningrad, 1926.)

### III

## TYPES INSTEAD OF ACTORS<sup>82</sup>

(ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE FILM SOCIETY)

**F**IRST of all allow me, in the name of Russian film-workers, to greet in your person that organisation [the Film Society] which was the first to undertake the task of acquainting the English public with our films.

I ask you to forgive my bad English. Unfortunately my knowledge of it is so limited that I cannot speak, but must read my notes, and even then not very well. I shall endeavour to acquaint you in this short speech with some of the principles which form the basis of our work. When I say "our" I mean, in fact, the directors of the so-called left wing.\*

I began my work in the films quite accidentally. Up to 1920 I was a chemical engineer, and, to tell you the truth, looked at films with contempt, though I was very fond of art in other forms. I, like many others, could not agree that films were an art. I looked upon them as an inferior substitute for the stage, that is all.

Such an attitude is not to be wondered at,

\* See note to section : Translator's Preface.

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<sup>81</sup> First published as *Number Eight* of a series of popular monthly film handbooks by *Kino pravitel*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1929.]



The painter's materials are colour, and he combines them in space on the surface of the canvas. What then, is the material which the film director possesses, and what are the methods of composition of his material?

Kuleshov maintained that the material in film-work consists of pieces of film, and that the composition method is their joining together in a particular, creatively discovered order. He maintained that film-art does not begin when the artists act and the various scenes are shot—this is only the preparation of the material. Film-art begins from the moment when the director begins to combine and join together the various pieces of film. By joining them in various combinations, in different orders, he obtains differing results.

. . . . .

Suppose, for example, we have three such pieces : on one is somebody's smiling face, on another is a frightened face, and on the third is a revolver pointing at somebody.

Let us combine these pieces in two different orders. Let us suppose that in the first instance we show, first the smiling face, then the revolver, then the frightened face ; and that the second time we show the frightened face first, then the revolver, then the smiling face. In the first instance the impression we get is that the owner of the face is a coward ; in the second that he is brave. This is certainly a crude example, but from contemporary

films we can see more subtly that it is only by an able and inspired combination of pieces of the shot film that the strongest impression can be effected in the audience.

Kuleshov and I made an interesting experiment. We took from some film or other several close-ups of the well-known Russian actor Mosjukhin. We chose close-ups which were static and which did not express any feeling at all—quiet close-ups. We joined these close-ups, which were all similar, with other bits of film in three different combinations. In the first combination the close-up of Mosjukhin was immediately followed by a shot of a plate of soup standing on a table. It was obvious and certain that Mosjukhin was looking at this soup. In the second combination the face of Mosjukhin was joined to shots showing a coffin in which lay a dead woman. In the third the close-up was followed by a shot of a little girl playing with a funny toy bear. When we showed the three combinations to an audience which had not been let into the secret the result was terrific. The public raved about the acting of the artist. They pointed out the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked on the dead woman, and admired the light, happy smile with which he surveyed the girl at play. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same.

But the combination of various pieces in one or another order is not sufficient. It is necessary to be

le to control and manipulate the length of these pieces, because the combination of pieces of varying length is effective in the same way as the combination of sounds of various length in music, by creating the rhythm of the film and by means of their varying effect on the audience. Quick, short pieces rouse excitement, while long pieces have a soothing effect.

. . . . .

To be able to find the requisite order of shots or pieces, and the rhythm necessary for their combination—that is the chief task of the director's art. This art we call *montage*—or constructive editing. It is only with the help of *montage* that I am able to solve problems of such complexity as the work on the artists' acting.

The thing is, that I consider that the main danger for an actor who is working on the films is so-called "stagey acting." I want to work only with real material—this is my principle. I maintain that to show, alongside real water and real trees and grass, a property beard pasted on the actor's face, wrinkles traced by means of paint, or stagey acting is impossible. It is opposed to the most elementary ideas of style.

But what should one do? It is very difficult to work with stage actors. People so exceptionally talented that they can live, and not act, are very seldom met with, while if you ask an ordinary actor merely to sit quietly and not to act, he will act for your benefit the type of a non-acting actor.

I have tried to work with people who had never seen either a play or a film, and I succeeded, with the help of *montage*, in achieving some result. It is true that in this method one must be very cunning; it is necessary to invent thousands of tricks to create the mood required in the person and to catch the right moment to photograph him.

For example, in the film *The Hero of Jenghiz Khan*, I wanted to have a crowd of Mongols looking with rapture on a precious fox-fur. I engaged a Chinese conjuror and photographed the faces of the Mongols watching him. When I joined this piece to a piece of the shot of fur held in the hands of the seller I got the result required. Once I spent endless time and effort trying to obtain from an actor a good-natured smile—it did not succeed because the actor kept on "acting." When I did catch a moment, and photographed his face smiling at a joke I made, he had been firmly convinced that the shooting was over.

. . . . .

I am continuously working on the perfection of this method, and I believe in its future. Of course, one can photograph in this way only short bits of separate actors, and it is the art of the director, with the help of *montage*, to make out of the short bits a whole, a living figure.

Not for a moment do I regret that I took this line. I more and more often work with casual actors, and I am satisfied by the results. In my last film I met

the Mongols, absolutely uncultured people who did not even understand my language, and, despite this, the Mongols in that film can easily compete, as far as acting honours are concerned, with the best actors.

. . . . .

In conclusion I would like to tell you of my views on a very tricky question which I have met recently. I mean sound films.

I think that their future is enormous, but when I use the expression "sound film" I do not in any way mean dialogue films, in which the speech and various sound effects are perfectly synchronised with their corresponding visual images on the screen. Such films are nothing but a photographic variety of stage plays. They are, of course, new and interesting, and will undoubtedly at first attract the curiosity of the public, but not for long.

The real future belongs to sound films of another kind. I visualise a film in which sounds and human speech are wedded to the visual images on the screen in the same way as that in which two or more melodies can be combined by an orchestra. The sound will correspond to the film in the same way as the orchestra corresponds to the film to-day.

The only difference from the method of to-day is that the director will have the control of the sound in his own hands, and not in the hands of the conductor of the orchestra, and that the wealth of those sounds will be overwhelming. All the sounds

of the whole world, beginning with the whisper of a man or the cry of a child and rising to the roar of an explosion. The expressionism of a film can reach unthought-of heights.

It can combine the fury of a man with the roar of a lion. The language of the cinema will achieve the power of the language of literature.

. . . . .

But one must never show on the screen a man and reproduce his word exactly synchronised with the movements of his lips. This is cheap imitation, an ingenious trick that is useless to anyone.

One of the Berlin Pressmen asked me : " Do you not think that it would be good to hear, for instance, in the film *Mother*, the weeping mother when she watches over the body of her dead husband ? " I answered : " If this were possible I would do it thus : The mother is sitting near the body and the audience hears clearly the sound of the water dripping in the wash-basin ; then comes the shot of the silent head of the dead man with the burning candle ; and here one hears a subdued weeping."

That is how I imagine to myself a film that sounds, and I must point out that such a film will remain international. Words and sounds heard, but not seen on the screen, could be rendered in any language, and changed with the film for every country.

. . . . .

Allow me to conclude this note by thanking you for the patience and attention with which you have listened through my address.

(Delivered, in the present translation by I. M. and S. S. N., to the Film Society, in Stewart's Café, Regent Street, February 3, 1929. Published, slightly amended, by the Cinema, February 6, 1929.)

## IV

### CLOSE-UPS IN TIME "

(ADDRESS FOR THE WORKERS' FILM FEDERATION)

**D**URING the summer of the year 1930 I attended a meeting in the Palace of Labour at Moscow. Work was ended. Outside in the street it was raining hard, and we had to wait for it to stop. The globules of water rebounded slightly from the sill; now they were large, now smaller until they vanished in the air. They moved, rising and falling in curves of various form, in a complex yet definite rhythm. Sometimes several streams, probably influenced by the wind, united into one. The water would strike upon the stone, scattering into a transparent, shivering fan, then fall, and anew the round and glistening globules would leap over the edge, mingling with the tiny raindrops descending through the air.

What a rain! I was but watching it, yet I felt to the full its freshness, its moisture, its generous plenty. I felt drenched in it. It poured down on my head and over my shoulders. Most certainly the earth, soaked brimful, must long have ceased to drink it up. The shower, as commonly occurs in summer, ended almost abruptly, scattering its last drops beneath the already brightening sun.

I left the building and, passing through the garden,



paused to watch a man working with a scythe. He was bared to the waist. The muscles of his back contracted and expanded with the even sweep of the scythe. Its damp blade, flying upwards, caught the sunlight and burst for a moment into a sharp, blinding flame. I stepped near. The scythe buried itself in the wet, rank grass, which, as it was cut away beneath, slowly gave down on to the ground in a supple movement impossible to describe. Gleaming in the slanting sunrays, the raindrops trembled on the tips of the pointed, drooping grass-blades, tumbled, and fell. The man mowed; I stood and gazed. And once more I found myself gripped by an unaccustomed feeling of excitement at the grandeur of the spectacle. Never had I seen wet grass like this! Never had I seen how the raindrops tumble down the grooves of its narrow blades! For the first time I was seeing how its stalks fall as they yield to the sweep of the scythe!

And, as always, according to my invariable custom (doubtless one familiar to all film directors), I tried to imagine to myself all this represented on the screen. I recalled the reaping scenes recorded and included scores of times in an abundance of pictures, and felt sharply the poverty of these lifeless photographs in comparison with the marvellous and pregnant richness I had seen. One has only to picture to oneself the flat, grey manikin waving a long pole, invariably in slightly speeded tempo, to picture the grass shot from above and looking like dry, tangled matting, for it to be clear in what

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I left the building and, passing through the garden,

against a stone balustrade. As the glittering drops leap up—their movements are exceptionally slow—can be seen all the complex, wondrous play of their intersecting paths through the air. Once more the movement speeds, but already the rain is lessening. Closing, come shots of wet grass beneath the sun. The wind waves it, it slowly sways, the raindrops slide away, and fall. This movement, taken with the highest speed of the "slow-motion" camera, showed me for the first time that it is possible to record and reproduce the movement of grass before the wind. In earlier pictures I had seen nothing but a dry, hysterically trembling tangle. I am deeply convinced both of the need for and the sense of practicability achieved by this new method.

It is of the highest importance to appreciate, in all its profundity, the essence of this work in "slow-motion," and to exploit it not as a trick, but as a means of consciously, at required points, retarding or accelerating movement *to a precise degree*. It is necessary to be able to exploit every possible speed of the camera, from the very highest, yielding on the screen exceptional slowness of movement, to the very least, resulting on the screen in an incredible swiftness. Sometimes a very slight retardation just of the plain and simple walk of a human being endows it with a weight and significance that could never be rendered by acting. I tried to render a shell explosion by an editing construction of shots at various speeds: Slow at the beginning; then very rapid flight; slightly retarded development;

a gifted observer, who has perceived the thing or process more clearly than anyone else has ever done before.

I am convinced that this method can be extended to work in shooting a man -his expression, his gestures. I already know by experience what precious material is afforded by a man's smile shot in "slow-motion." I have extracted from such shots some remarkable pauses, wherein the eyes alone are engaged in a smile that the lips have not yet begun to share. A tremendous future stretches before the "close-up of time." Particularly in sound film, where the rhythm is given point and complexity by its conjunction with sound, particularly here is it important.

## ASYNCHRONISM AS A PRINCIPLE OF SOUND FILM

THE technical invention of sound has long been accomplished, and brilliant experiments have been made in the field of recording. This technical side of sound-film making may be regarded as already relatively perfected, at least in America. But there is a great difference between the technical development of sound and its development as a means of *expression*. The expressive achievements of sound still lie far behind its technical possibilities. I assert that many theoretical questions whose answers are clear to us are still provided in practice only with the most primitive solutions. Theoretically, we in the Soviet Union are in advance of Western Europe and U.S.A.

Our first question is : What new content can be brought into the cinema by the use of Sound ? It would be entirely false to consider sound merely as a mechanical device enabling us to enhance the naturalness of the image. Examples of such most primitive sound effects : in the silent cinema we were able to show a car, now in sound film we can add to its image a record of its natural sound ; or again, in silent film a speaking man was associated with a title, now we hear his voice. The role which sound is to play in film is much more significant

speech, and the spectator is interested in the answer, he can immediately be shown the person addressed, only presently hearing the answer. Here the sound follows the image.

Or, yet again, the spectator having grasped the import of a speech may be interested in its *effect*. Accordingly, while the speech is still in progress, he can be shown a given listener, or indeed given a review of all those present and mark their reactions towards it.

These examples show clearly how the director, by means of editing, can move his audience emotionally or intellectually, so that it experiences a special rhythm in respect to the sequence presented on the screen.

But such a relationship between the director in his cutting-room and his future audience can be established only if he has a psychological insight into the nature of his audience and its consequent relationship to the content of the given material.

For instance, if the first speaker in a dialogue grips the attention of the audience, the second speaker will have to utter a number of words before they will so affect the consciousness of the audience that it will adjust its full attention to him. And, contrariwise, if the intervention of the second speaker is more vital to the scene at the moment than the impression made by the first speaker, then the audience's full attention will at once be riveted on him. I am sure, even, that it is possible to build up a dramatic incident with the recorded sound of a

speech and the image of the unspeaking listener where the latter's reaction is the most urgent emotion in the scene. Would a director of any imagination handle a scene in a court of justice where a sentence of death is being passed by filming the judge pronouncing sentence in preference to recording visually the immediate reactions of the condemned?

In the final scenes of my first sound film *Deserter* my hero tells an audience of the forces that brought him to the Soviet Union. During the whole of the film his worse nature has been trying to stifle his desire to escape these forces; therefore this moment, when he at last succeeds in escaping them and himself desires to recount his cowardice to his fellow-workers is the high-spot of his emotional life. Being unable to speak Russian, his speech has to be translated.

At the beginning of this scene we see and hear shots longish in duration, first of the speaking hero, then of his translator. In the process of development of the episode the images of the translator become shorter and the majority of his words accompany the images of the hero, according as the interest of the audience automatically fixes on the latter's psychological position. We can consider the composition of sound in this example as similar to the objective rhythm and dependent on the actual time relationships existing between the speakers. Longer or shorter pauses between the voices are conditioned solely by the readiness or hesitation of the next speaker in what he wishes to say. But the image introduces to the screen a new element, the

of montage. I took sound strips and cut, for example, for a word of a speaker broken in half an interruption, for the interrupter in turn overruled by the tide of noise coming from the crowd, for a speaker audible again, and so on. Every sound was individually cut and the images associated with it sometimes much shorter than the associated sound piece, sometimes as long as two sound pieces—the word of speaker and interrupter, for example—while they show a number of individual reactions in the audience. Sometimes I have cut the general crowd noise into the phrases with scissors, and I have found that with an arrangement of the various sounds by cutting in this way it is possible to create a clear and definite, almost musical, rhythm: a rhythm that develops and increases short piece by short piece till it reaches a climax of emotional effect that swells like the waves on a sea.

I maintain that directors lose all reason to be afraid of cutting the sound strip if they accept the principle of arranging it in a distinct composition. Provided that they are linked by a clear idea of the course to be pursued, various sounds can, exactly like images, be set side by side in montage. Remember the early days of the cinema, when directors were afraid to cut up the visual movement on the screen, and how Griffith's introduction of the close-up was misunderstood and by many labelled an unnatural and consequently an inadmissible method. Audiences in those days even cried: "Where are their legs!"



Cutting was the development that first transformed the cinema from a mechanical process to a creative one. The slogan *Cut* remains equally imperative now that sound film has arrived. I believe that sound film will approach nearer to true musical rhythm than silent film ever did, and this rhythm must derive not merely from the movement of artist and objects on the screen, but also—and this is the consideration most important for us to-day—from exact cutting of the sound and arrangement of the sound pieces into a clear counterpoint with the image.

I worked out in fine rhythm, suitable to sound film, a special kind of musical composition for the May Day demonstration in *Deserter*. A hundred thousand men throng the streets, the air is filled with the echoing strains of massed bands, lifting the masses to exuberance. Into the patchwork of sound breaks singing, and the strains of accordions, the hooting of motor-cars, snatches of radio noises, shouts and huzzas, the powerful buzzing of aeroplanes. Certainly it would have been stupid to have attempted to create such a sound scene in the studio with orchestras and supers.

In order to give my future audience a true impression of this gigantic perspective of mass sound, its echoes and its multitudinous complexities, I recorded real material. I used two Moscow demonstrations, those in May and November of one year, to assemble the variety of sounds necessary for my future montage. I recorded pieces of various music



lengths, they served to me as notes of music. As finale of the docks scene I made a half-symbolic growth of the ship in images at an accelerated pace, while the sound in a complicated syncopation mounts to an ever greater and grandiose climax. Here I had a real musical task, and was obliged to "feel" the length of each strip in the same spirit as a musician "feels" the accent necessary for each note.

I have used only real sound because I hold the view that sound, like visual material, must be rich in its association, a thing impossible for reconstructed sound to be. I maintain that it is impossible artificially to establish perspective in sound; it is impossible, for instance, to secure a real effect of a distant siren call in a closed studio and relatively near the microphone. A "distant" call achieved by a weak tone in the studio can never create the same reality of effect as a loud blast recorded half a mile away in the open air.

For the symphony of siren calls with which *Deserter* opens I had six steamers playing in a space of a mile and a half in the Port of Leningrad. They sounded their calls to a prescribed plan and we worked at night in order that we should have quiet.

Now that I have finished *Deserter* I am sure that sound film is potentially the art of the future. It is not an orchestral creation centring round music, nor yet a theatrical dominated by the factor of the actor, nor even is it akin to opera, it is a synthesis of each and every element—the oral, the visual, the

philosophical ; it is our opportunity to translate the world in all its lines and shadows into a new art form that has succeeded and will supersede all the older arts, for it is the supreme medium in which we can express to-day and to-morrow.

(Written for the cinema and Englished by Marie Seton and J. M.

## NOTES AND APPENDICES

### A.—GLOSSARIAL NOTES

IN the discussion of any technical subject it is necessary to employ technical terms. Technical cinematographic terms afford wide opportunities for ambiguity and obscurity in two ways. In the first place, they are usually not invented words, but words in common use extended to embrace technical meanings, to the confusion of the layman. In the second place, they vary slightly owing to differing practices in differing countries, or even in different studios, to the confusion of the expert. It is therefore desirable to establish, by definition, the sense in which technical terms have been employed in the preceding essays.

The word *Producer* in the film world is properly applied only to the business man, financial organiser, managing director of a producing concern; the driving-force rather than the technical guidance behind any given production. *Producer* in the stage sense has become *Director* in the films. This terminology is American in origin, but is now universal in England also.

The word *Scenario* is loosely applied to almost any written matter relating to the story preparation of a film in any of its stages. The course of development is roughly as follows\*: The *Synopsis* is an

\* *Theme* is a term of sense almost exactly congruous to its non-specialist meaning. It never represents a written document, except possibly in the case where the film's genesis is represented by the producer commanding, "Make me a war-film, a film of mother-love, or so forth."

outline of three or four typewritten pages containing the barest summary of character and action. It is made for the convenience of the producer or scenario-chooser, who may be too busy or unwilling to study potential subjects at length. In the adaptation of a book or a play, the synopsis represents the first stage. In the case of an original film story it may rather be a *précis* of the next stage following.

This is the *Treatment*. A treatment is more extensive, usually from twenty to fifty pages. Here although still written throughout in purely narrative form, we have, already indicated by means of a certain degree of detail in pictorial description, the actual visual potentialities of the suggested action. The use of the word scenario for either of these documents is more common with the layman than with the technician. Credit for a treatment is given, on a title or in a technical publication, more often by the words "Story by" than by association with the scenario. The words "Scenario by" imply work on a yet later stage—the shooting-script.

The *Shooting-script* is the scenario in its final cinematograph form, with all its incidents and appearances broken up in numbered sequence into the separate images from which they will be later represented. These separate images are called *Script-scenes*, listed, in the typewritten abbreviation of a usual shooting-script, simply as *Scenes*—e.g. Scene 1, Scene 2, etc. The words appearing upon the screen are also listed, as *Main-titles* (the name of the film, and credit-titles), *Sub-titles* (never "captions"—this is a layman's term), *Inserts*, writings that

are part of a scene, and *Superimposed titles*, a term carrying its own meaning.

It is evident from Pudovkin's essay on the scenario that an intermediate stage, quite unusual in England or America, intervenes in U.S.S.R. between the purely narrative treatment and its complete cinematographic analysis, the *shooting-script*. In this stage the titles stand already numbered, so do the separate tiny incidents, but there is no indication yet of the images to be selected to compose them. Such an incident Pudovkin terms a "scene," using the word almost in the sense in which it is used in a classical French play, to indicate not merely a change of place, but even a change of circumstance such as the entrance or exit of a player. To avoid confusion, the word scene has been avoided in this text, being rendered by "incident," except in the example given of this stage of treatment.\*

The *Sequence* is a convenient division, into a series of which the action naturally falls. The sequences are already scedable even in the purely narrative treatment, and may each contain numbers of incidents, or scenes (in the Pudovkin sense). *The sequence of the stealing of the Princess* embraces all the business of running away with her, possibly involving interactions at several different geographical points. *The "scene" (Pudovkin's sense) of the Princess being stolen* probably covers only the actual carrying her out of her bedroom; dragging her down the stairs would be another "scene" (incident, in the phraseology

\* Those interested to study further the Soviet method of writing scenarios are referred to two published examples: that of Eisenstein and Alexandrov's "*The General Line*," published as a booklet in German, and extracts from Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Montagu's "*An American Tragedy*," published by the late H. A. Potamkin in "*Close-Up*."

I have employed). The separate parts that compose such a "scene," the as yet further indivisible atom of the film-structure,\* are termed variously according to their function considered at the moment. In their philosophic function we term them *separate images*; materially, *separate pieces of celluloid*; functionally, in the shooting-script, *script-scenes* (abbreviated *scenes*), as separate tasks upon the floor of the studio or as separate parts of a finished, edited film, *Shots*; while in the cutting-room we find that each is represented by several subumular pieces, varying in number according to the number of times its action was respectively shot, spoken of as the several *Takes* of one shot.

On the floor of the studio we *Shoot* or *Take* the shots. The latter expression is perhaps the more common in speaking of a script-scene in single aspect ("How many times did we take that scene?"), the former as a general term ("We shot ten scenes before lunch"; "We could not shoot to-day, because of fog"). The word *Turn*, a transliteration of which is used in several European languages instead of *shoot*, is used in English only of the special activity of a cameraman ("Who turned for you on that picture?"). Note that in our last example *Picture* is used to mean *whole film*. This sense is slang rather than technical. The *picture* should properly imply the composition space of an image†—i.e., *Picture-shape*, meaning screen-shape. The camera *Set-up*

\* The actual subdivisibility of the atom is in film paralleled only by those instances (double exposure and the like) in which a single shot is blended from the effects of more than one separate camera action.

† The composition space termed *picture* on the floor is termed a *shot* in the cutting-room, though its height, as a unit of the length of



refers to its position in relation to the shot object, not only its distance from the object, but also its angle to it. If we alter the one or the other we alter the set-up. The *Camera-angle*, in this sense, is the relation between the vertical and horizontal axes of the object shot on the one hand, and the plane of the film at the moment of shooting on the other. The *distances* of the camera from the shot object are technically designated as *Long-Shot*, *Mid-Shot*, and *Close-Up*, with their manifold supplementaries. No two studios, directors, or scenarists will agree absolutely about the measure of these shots, which have constancy only in their relation to one another. One technician will describe a distance showing the figure from crown to knee as a mid-shot, another as a medium long-shot. The full tally is something like *distance-shot*, *long-shot*, *medium long-shot*, *mid-shot*, *semi-close-up*, *close-up*, *big close-up* (or, in the appropriate special case, *big head*).

It is important to gain a clear conception of the activities embraced here by the word *Editing*. The word used by Pudovkin, the German and French word, is *montage*. Its only possible English equivalent is *editing*. But in England, in the trade, the editor is too often conceived of as a humble person, called in after the damage, or good, has been done upon the floor, to accomplish a relatively mechanical task upon material the effect of which has been already settled. The word *editing*, as used here in its correct sense, has a far wider, constructive application. It

the picture, has then become more significant than its general shape. The *frame*, three-quarters of an inch high on the actual piece of standard size celluloid, is the concrete unit, repetition of which gives, in projection of a shot, the illusion of movement.



*Greed* for Universal and *Wedding March* for Paramount were ruthlessly cut down and the wholes have never been seen. On the Continent, where single-feature programmes are the rule, a film usually attains 9,000 feet—1½ hours. In England and U.S.A., with the habit of double programmes, only exceptional films attain 90 minutes and the usual length is 70. (p. 9.)

2. Neglect of this rule, to establish clearly the theme first of all and select all incident only to express it, was almost certainly the root cause of the failure of Pudovkin's penultimate film, *A Simple Case*. Not all its later devised ingenious embellishments could save it, the fault was in its genesis. (p. 10.)

3. This example may be obscure to the reader not grounded in reformist or revolutionary politics. To a Russian an anarchist is a definite type—shock-headed, piercing eyes, spouting, impractical—in vivid contrast to the communist ideal of an athletic, disciplined, handy-man, that the hero finally becomes. The replacement in the scenario of a vaguely turbulent character by an anarchist is thus, to a Russian, a gain in *definiteness*. It is as if a character, vague and intangible, were described in an English scenario as being "in the army." By tightening in revision the character is made a sergeant-major. Everyone in England knows what a sergeant-major is like; the other persons in the story can be readily characterised by their reactions to him. The gain in definiteness is obvious. (p. 11.)

4. How far and under what conditions are "spoken phrases" admissible in sound films? The author gives his view on this question in essays VII and VIII. (p. 14.)



or the amateur. It should be noted, indeed, that in production for two-projector exhibition the reverse requirement obtains. The cutter should take care not to divide his reels at the end of a sequence. A short footage is almost always lost to view in each change-over, owing to the precautions taken by the operator to avoid at all costs the shattering appearance on the screen of the tag "End of Reel X" or "Reel X + 1." For example, the penultimate and last reels of *Two Days*. Here the Russian, relying on his interval, shows at the end of the penultimate reel a short shot of the father kneeling by his hanged son; slow fade-out. Interval for lacing up the next reel. Fade-in, father rising to his feet. We are aware that he has been long dazed with sorrow, and has at last reached a critical impulse, to fire the house of his son's executioners. On a Western apparatus the change-over swallows all, or the best part of, the fades. The father appears merely to indulge in a more or less irrational kneeling-down and almost immediate standing-up, and much of the "rightness" of the psychology of his impulse is lost. Care should be taken, therefore, by the cutter to divide his reels preferably at a place of cross-cut shots where loss of perhaps the last foot of one and the first foot of another will be insignificant. (p. 21.)

9. Note that in a talking-film script, the dialogue is set out bunched up on the right-hand side of the page, as in a play, not between the scenes and level with them, as the spoken sub-titles here. (p. 21.)

10. Refer to Glossarial Notes. (p. 23.)

11. A girl member of the Young Communist League. (p. 23.)

12. This paragraph remains equally true for

sound films in Pudovkin's view. So long as an image appears it should not be casual, but selected for its expression; similarly speech should not be casual—the speech that might happen to be uttered—but rigidly selected and arranged for maximum expression. See his essays VII and VIII. (p. 27.)

13. The principle has a useful application, by converse inference, for the editor (the cutter and titler, called in after the damage is done) as well as for the scenarist. Suppose he be confronted with this weak scene of Olga walking out on her husband already made, he can slightly strengthen it by weakening the preceding title—that is, making it more indefinite. Thus: "Olga, unable to endure her hard-hearted husband, came to a crucial decision." (p. 33.)

14. A long experience of titling enables me to be not contradictory, but perhaps more definite. Three considerations affect titles, they are, in order of descending importance: (a) content, (b) style, (c) compression.

The absolutely clear significance of the content for the development of the action is paramount. That satisfied, the use of phraseology in spoken titles helping to characterize a speaker or his mood, or of style in continuity titles wedded to the momentary spirit of the film, may be exceedingly valuable. Compression, though to be considered only after the other two desiderata, is highly important; though few spectators are analphabets, reading is, to many of them, an exercise, and, if the screen be full of type, an astonishing number make no effort to begin with it at all. (p. 33.)

15. Methods of measuring title-length vary. That

given here, though used in several studios, is an excessively large approximation. A more exact allowance is one foot for each of the first five words, and one foot for each subsequent pair of words. This presupposes that a material part of the time taken in reading a card is taken up, firstly, in adjustment to the first appearance of the card, secondly, in adjustment to each new word; length of words is regarded as temporally relatively unimportant, for most long words are recognised when only a part of their length has been spelt out. For this view there is experimental support. (p. 33.)

16. To it belongs also the science of selection of fount (or script), tone, and background. (p. 34.)

17. To avoid interruption of the flow of rapid action by length in a title, the Russians introduced the method of "split-titles," that is, distribution of the essential content to be rendered on to two or three separated cards; each is thus shown short in footage and the tempo undisturbed. Still faster, in his penultimate film, Pudovkin cut alternate frames of a title and a picture in battle scenes. This gave an effect of almost machine-gun rapidity. Alternate frame effects can also be got, perhaps more easily, in what is called an "optical printer." (p. 35.)

18. The text is here slightly amended. The author gives as his simple form the iris-in and iris-out, mentioning what is called the fade only as a variant. Irises were used far more in the past than to-day, the fade has now been found to be less distracting to the spectator. The mere reversal of their respective positions, with little phrase alteration, is effective in modernising the passage. (p. 35.)

19. See Note 18. (p. 36.)

20. These effects have lately come very much into fashion; they are called "wipes," and are most usually effected not in the camera but on the printer. (p. 36.)

21. The mix *need* not be effected at once in the camera; it can be made subsequently in the printing, or by various trick processes. As a matter of fact, however—though there is no theoretical reason why it should be so—such processes and printing machines are, in practice, nearly always imperfect, and result in a loss of photographic quality. (p. 37.)

22. Accomplished by means of a camera accessory, such a shot is termed a "pan." Accomplished by free-hand, it is usually termed a "swinging" shot. (p. 37.)

23. There is strong difference on this point. A costly process, owing to the time taken for the complex preparation of such a shot, the prodigal Americans use it more and more frequently, for such purposes as the following of a character along passages, up flights of stairs, and so forth. Tracking (and panning) are in disfavour with the left-wing Russian school, for, naturalists, they hold such methods easily tend to remind the spectator of the presence of the camera. (p. 38.)

24. The same effect is often obtained by gauze or cigarette smoke in front of the lens. (p. 38.)

25. Scenes and script-scenes. Refer to Glossarial Notes. (p. 39.)

26. A further wide textual alteration. Discussion was given of the editing of the reel ("each reel is a more or less complete whole, corresponding, to a certain degree, to an act upon the stage") and of



the scenario separately. In considering reels, the author repeated the desideratum that their material must be independent and self-contained, though now adding that, with two-projector exhibition, this is unnecessary. In considering the scenario as a whole, the author suggested the various size of reels as a means of sparing to the end the energy of the spectator. The early ones long, while he is fresh, the middle reels shorter, and the last reel, if necessary, longer again, so that the pure final action need not be interrupted by new lacing-up. These observations are significant in Western Europe and America for amateurs only. Refer to Note 8. (*p.* 45.)

27. The author here repeated, almost word for word, the account of those scenes given on *p.* 19. (*p.* 49.)

(ii) NOTES TO "FILM DIRECTOR AND FILM MATERIAL"

28. The great significance here alluded to by Pudovkin is the economic consequence that cost of performance becomes a mere fraction of cost of production. Whereas in the theatre or concert hall, chief analogies in the entertainment industry, costs of repeat performance are relatively much nearer original production costs. This, not anything in their respective intrinsic possibilities of creative method, determines the paramountcy of theatre for esoteric groups, and puts the cinema as a mass art out on its own with limitless financial resources. (*p.* 52.)

29. The original here speaks of the impossibility of approaching "scenes," using the word in the classical French sense. See Glossarial Notes. (*p.* 57.)

30. The net is "cheated." Any movement or

object outside the picture-frame or otherwise unremarked is said to be "cheated." (p. 57.)

31. Communist mixed Boy and Girl Scouts. (p. 58.)

32. By a curious error of mistranslation on the part of the German renters of this film it has been customary to refer to this warship as an armoured cruiser (*Panzerkreuzer*). Both in actuality and in the Russian name of the film the *Potemkin* is a pre-dreadnought battleship, the full name of which is *Potemkin Tavritcheski* (ex *Pantelimon*, ex *Kniaz Potemkin Tavritcheski*). It was completed in 1900, and its details are given as follows: Displacement, 12,480 metric tons; complement, 741; guns, four 12", sixteen 6", fourteen 11-pounders, six 3-pounders; 5 torpedo-tubes, speed, about 16 knots. It closely resembles those English classes of pre-dreadnought—*Bulwark*, *Formidable*, *Majestic*, *Canopus*—of which so many examples were lost during the war. (p. 67.)

33. These are the marble steps leading from the statue of the Duc de Richelieu on the boulevard to the docks below. (p. 67.)

34. In the German edition the translators here inserted Ruttman's *Berlin* as a film of this kind. This is absurd; *Berlin* was most carefully scripted and exactly executed, and the instance was repudiated by Pudovkin when brought to his attention. (p. 72.)

35. The counter to this rule is, of course, Dziga-Vertov with his theory of the "Kino-eye." Dziga-Vertov holds that the director should stage nothing, simply going about quietly and unobservedly accumulating material with the camera, his "Kino-eye," and that only such a film as one in which the director's "interference" with the natural course of events is limited to choosing and eliminating

ails can properly be called documentary. It is a matter of degree. At the one pole there is the arbitrary, staged and acted event—*Chang* or the sandstorm in *Turksib*, at the other the lurking about the streets of Ruttmann in *Berlin* or Dziga-Vertov. But even Dziga-Vertov would doubtless repeat and "interfere" in the sense of the next paragraph to secure certain material. (p. 74.)

36. In England it is the whole work of one member of the producing team, the "continuity" or floor-secretary, to aid the director to keep watch on correspondences of this kind. (p. 79.)

37. Recall that the director's field will alter with every lens. Modification of the amount of space to be embraced may often be effected not by change of set-up but by change of lens. (p. 80.)

38. In "The Dynamic Square," Eistenstein eloquently pleads for all those male shapes utterly banned from proper screen expression by its at present accepted frame. (p. 81.)

39. *The Mechanism of the Brain*, Reel One. (p. 83.)

40. At the former Imperial summer residence in Livadea, near Yalta. (p. 89.)

41. Pudovkin is himself a declared and practising disciple of the American Griffith in this matter. Compare the steady, inexorable flow of spring river ice and the marching, demonstrating workers in *Mother*; compare the storm, existing for the story not in reality but only in emotion, that sweeps away the English at the finale of *Jenghiz Khan*. This last is his most daring and remarkable achievement. For the risk of introducing an emotional environmental effect is that it is much less likely than a real one to be apprehended unconsciously by the audience;

it may become a symbol, requiring conscious effort for comprehension, and risk passing the audience by, e.g., the Regeneration Sequence in *Simple Case*. (p. 101.)

42. Recall again the Separator Sequence, *General Line*, Reel Two. (p. 104.)

43. Example : The grimacing and painted Krauss standing on a real hill, pretending to influence a real fox, real foxhounds and horses ; a preposterous scene in *The Student of Prague*. (p. 106.)

44. It requires such an abundance of stock on the regular pay-roll as can only be afforded by the wealthiest film-company. The herding of extras into a film-city, in which all companies centralise their studios, has, however, something of the same effect. (p. 108.)

45. Many historians of the Theatre would disagree. (p. 110.)

46. For Pudovkin's views on the proper relation of speeches and movements in dialogue film see essays VII and VIII. (p. 115.)

47. Remember also the face of the Mongol in the finale of *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*. (p. 119.)

48. Soft-focus, refer note 24 (p. 122).

49. This is a considerable over-estimate for the conditions of commercial film production in the West. Companies with big studio investments hate going on location ; they must keep their studios occupied to cover their overheads. (p. 129).

50. This, of course, the elimination of the supererogatory, is what makes the Close-up the keystone of the whole power and effectiveness of the cinema. A measure—the ultimate possible—of the unconsciousness of the West and its innocence of theory

was seen at that meeting of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the would-be learned society of Hollywood, at which were delivered Eisenstein's remarks on "The Dynamic Square." This meeting was called to consider Wide Film. A prominent cameraman from Fox was recounting his experiences. Although one could not approach close enough to the subject to secure a close-up, he declared this was no drawback, for the image on the screen was so large that the characters' expressions could none the less be clearly discerned even in mid-shot! Despite the presence of a multitude of directors and leading technicians from every studio, this astounding appraisal excited no remark. To this day, though their pragmatism has taught them to drop Wide Film after stinging losses, the big companies are probably quite mystified and unable to account for the public's indifference to it. (p. 129.)

51. There is a growing tendency, alas, in England and America for the director too to leave, his picture at this point passing to an "editor." It derives from commercial envy of the "quickies," and must tend, with them, to standardisation and mechanicalisation of style. (p. 136.)

52. In spite of this address it should be noted that Pudovkin does very often use actors. Inkishinov, Iaranskaja, Batalov, Baturin, are examples of more or less experienced actors in leading roles in his films. Other equally important parts are, it is true, played by complete novices and he certainly handles them all, experienced and otherwise, with the technique prescribed here for the handling of types. Dovzhenko uses types rather more, and only Eisenstein invariably. (p. 137).

53. Various means of obtaining "Close-ups in Time" have been used previously by directors other than the quoted Epstein. Turning the camera fast—though not in actual exaggerated slow-motion as in these experiments—is not at all uncommon for certain underlinings. Some of Fairbanks athletic feats were probably recorded in this way to emphasise their grace. Eisenstein, on the other hand, has always emphasised his moments by repetitive cutting. Recall the repetition in the enthroning in the tractor in the last reel of *General Line*, in the bridge scene of *October*, and as for the Odessa Steps scene in *Potemkin*—you will find that the soldiers march down this whole length two or three times if all the descent shots are added together. These are other technical means to the same end as the experiments in *A Simple Case* here described. (p. 146).

### C.—V. I. PUDOVKIN :

#### ICONOGRAPHY

1. *The Mechanism of the Brain* (Mejrabpom-russ, 1925)  
 Technical scientific direction : Professor L. N. Voskresenski and Professor D. S. Fursikov.  
 Technical cinematographic direction : V. I. Pudovkin.  
 Physiological experiments and operations : Professor D. S. Fursikov.  
 Animal-life direction : L. N. Danilov.  
 Conditional reflex experiments on children : Professor N. I. Krasnogorski.

Child-life direction : Professor A. S. Durnovo.  
Diagrams : I. Vano, D. Tcherkess, V. Merku-  
lov.

Photography : A. N. Golovnia.

A documentary film illustrative of comparative mental processes, more particularly of the progress in knowledge of conditioned reflexes attained by workers in Professor Pavlov's laboratory at the Academy of Sciences, Leningrad. Regarded as unsuitable for public presentation by the B.B. of F.C., February 1929. First exhibited in England, privately, to the Royal Society of Medicine (Neurological Section), March, 1929.

2. *The Chess Player* (Mejrabpom-russ, 1926).

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

A short comedy in which, by means of an experiment in cutting and editing, J. R. Capablanca is made to appear to play a part.

3. *Mother* (Mejrabpom-russ, 1926).

Based on the story by Maxim Gorki.

Scenario : N. A. Zarkhi.

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

Art Direction : S. V. Koslovski.

Photography : A. N. Golovnia.

Cast : *The father*—A. Tchistiakov\* ; *the mother*—Vera Baranovskaia ; *the son*—Nikolai Batalov.

Baranovskaia and Batalov are professionals, Tchistiakov is an accountant of Mejrabpom, he has appeared in each of Pudovkin's subsequent films. A small part in the film, that of a

\* Kenneth Macpherson, in Bryher's *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (q.v.), identifies this character as the actor Leistiakov.

mild, bespectacled officer, is played by Pudovkin. First performed in England, privately, at the Film Society, October 1928. Regarded as unsuitable for public presentation by the B.B. of F.C., November 1928.

4. *The End of St. Petersburg* (Mejrabpom-russ, 1927).

Scenario : N. A. Zarkhi.

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

Art Direction : S. V. Koslovski.

Photography : A. N. Golovnia.

Cast : *The Bolshevik*—A. Tchistiakov ; *his wife*—V. Baranovskaia ; *the peasant boy*—I. Tchuvelev ; *Lebedev*—V. Obolenski ; *a jingo*—V. Tsoppi.

The peasant boy is played by a peasant, whose brother appears, also as a peasant boy, in the blackleg scene. The part of his pregnant mother is played by a peasant woman. The stockbrokers are all former stockbrokers. Obolenski similarly a member of the former governing class. First performed in England, privately, at the Film Society, February 1929. *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan* (Mejrabpom-film, 1928). Based on a story by Novokshenov.

Scenario : O. Brik.

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

Art Direction : S. V. Koslovski and Aronson.

Photography : A. N. Golovnia.

Cast : *The Mongol*—V. Inkishinov ; *his father*—I. Inkishinov ; *the Partisan leader*—A. Tchistiakov ; *the Commandant*—L. Dedintsev ; *his wife*—L. Billinskaia ; *his daughter*—Anna Sujakevitch ; *a fur-trader*—V. Tsoppi ; *a soldier*—K. Gurniak ; *a missionary*—R. Pro.



## ON FILM TECHNIQUE

The four last-named actors are professional. Inkishinov is assistant producer in the Meyerhold Theatre. His father in the film is played by his actual father, on the location in which he has always lived. The Mongols and Mongolian ceremonies are actual. The film was regarded as unsuitable for public presentation by the B. of F.C., August 1929. First presented in England, privately, at the Film Society, February 1930.

6. *The Story of a Simple Case* (Mejrabpom-film, 1931)

Theme : M. Koltsova.

Scenario : A. Rzheshevski.

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

Photography : G. Kabalov.

Cast : (Prologue) *Worker*—A. Gortchilin ; *Wife*—Tchekulayeva ; *son*—M. Kashtelian ; (Story) *Uncle Sasha*—A. Tchistiakov ; *Pa*—A. Langovoi—A. Baturin ; *Fedya Zheltikov*—V. Kuzmitch ; *Masha Langovoi*—E. Rogulina ; *the second wife*—M. Belousova.

Baturin is a concert-singer ; Kuzmitch is actually a Red Army Officer ; Belousova is a Professor of Psychology. The film was first presented in England, privately, at the Film Society, May 1933 ; it has been withdrawn in the U.S.S.R. It was at first provisionally named *Life is Grand*.

7. *Deserter* (Mejrabpom-film, 1933).

Scenario : N. Agadjanova-Shutko, M. Krasnoperstovskii, A. Lezebnikov.

Direction : V. I. Pudovkin.

Art Direction : A. Kozlovski.

Photography : A. N. Golovnia.

Sound Recording : E. Nesterov.

Music : I. Shaporin.

Sound System : Tagephon.

Cast : Boris Livanov, M. Aleshchenko, A. Besperotov, S. Gerasimov, I. Gliser, K. Gurniak, A. Konsovski, V. Kovrigin, I. Lavrov, T. Makarova, T. Svashenko, A. Tchistiakov, V. Uralski.

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